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**From:** Infomart Newsletters
**Sent:** January 2, 2018 7:36 AM
**To:** Rosemarie Leclair
**Subject:** Morning News Clippings - Tuesday, January 2, 2018

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# Morning News Clippings

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Date: Tuesday, January 2, 2018
Edited by: Tara Brautigam ( Tara.Brautigam@oeb.ca )

Contact Editor

## Clippings Summary

### News - 11 Results

THE TRIBUNE

**OPG ordered to cut costs by $500M; Regulator scales back Ontario Power Generation rate-hike request over 'excessive'costs**

Welland Tribune - Sat Dec 30 2017
**Tone:** Positive
**Byline:** Geoff Zochodne

**Ad Value:** $952
**Reach:** 10214 **Page:** C6

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Mondaq - Tue Jan 2 2018
**Tone:** Neutral
Permalink

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# Full Articles

THE TRIBUNE

### OPG ordered to cut costs by $500M; Regulator scales back Ontario Power Generation rate-hike request over 'excessive'costs

Welland Tribune - Sat Dec 30 2017
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The Ontario Energy Board has ordered Ontario Power Generation Inc. to cut nuclearconnected costs by approximately $500 million over five years after finding that some of the company's proposed expenses, including those tied to compensation, were "excessive"in relation to those of comparable entities. OPG made an application for power payments it will receive for the years 2017 to 2021 to the OEB, the provincial regulator of the electricity industry, in May 2016.

The OEB acknowledged in a decision released Thursday that OPG's application was the "largest" rate case it had ever heard on a dollar basis, as the company had been seeking $16.8 billion in revenue over the five-year period for its nuclear facilities.

But the OEB also said it would reduce OPG's proposed operations, maintenance and administration budget for its nuclear power business by $100 million per year, "mainly due to the results of poor OPG performance against its comparators, and excessive compensation when compared to its benchmarked comparators and its own performance, and other excessive costs."

The compensation eyed by the OEB extends to OPG's pension and benefit costs, which the regulator said "are clearly excessive."

"The evidence supports a range of disallowances under different categories which in theory could have supported disallowances that could total much greater than $100 million," the decision added. "In reaching a final number the OEB has sought to balance the interests of ratepayers in not paying an unreasonable amount, and OPG's needs to fund its nuclear operations."

OPG's requested rates would have inflated the typical household hydro bill by approximately 65 cents a month in each year of the five-year application, the decision noted. The OEB ordered OPG to file a draft of its payments amounts reflecting the regulator's findings by Jan. 17, 2018, before the OEB makes a final decision some time next year.

"Only then will the exact payment amounts and customer bill impacts be known," the regulator added.

The decision will be felt across the province, as OPG is the largest producer of electricity in Ontario, operating two nuclear power plants, 66 hydroelectric stations, three thermal facilities and one wind turbine.

While OPG is wholly owned by Ontario, it also does business in the capital markets - it released its first public debt issue in October, a $500-million offering. The money will be used in part to help finance the plan to reduce electricity costs for residential consumers by an average of 25 per cent, which was brought in earlier this year by the provincial Liberal government, the so-called "Fair Hydro Plan."

OPG requested Jan. 1, 2017 as the effective date for its new power prices, but the OEB selected June 1, 2017, potentially cutting into OPG's payments.

OPG said Friday in a press release that it was "reviewing the decision in detail."

The subject of OPG's compensation has been a "contentious" one in the past, the OEB noted in its decision. A previous decision by the regulator on OPG's 2011 and 2012 payments, disallowing $145 million in nuclear-related labour costs for being excessive, was fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, which sided with the OEB. OPG is the only electricity generator in Ontario that has its rates set through a public process.

The company's 2017-2021 application also included a "rate smoothing" proposal that would defer the collecting of approximately $1 billion of revenue, plus $116 million of interest, the decision said. The OEB approved a deferral account for the smoothing revenue, with the final details still to come once the "unsmoothed" payments are nailed down.

"The impact of this Decision will not be seen on **customer** bills immediately due to smoothing and deferred revenue resulting from this proceeding," the **OEB** said in its decision. "In addition, because of the **Fair Hydro Plan**, for residential customers and some other customers, the immediate impact will be lessened."

**OPG**'s **application** also covered the $12.8-billion Darlington "megaprogram," as the **OEB** phrased it. The project aims to extend the life of the 27-year-old, four-reactor nuclear **power** plant, which provides approximately 20 per cent of the province's **electricity**, by approximately 30 years. Work began on revamping the first nuclear reactor in Oct. 2016, and the project is scheduled to take until 2026.

Jeff Lyash, president and chief executive officer of **OPG**, said in a Nov. 9 press release that the project "remains on time and on budget."

The **OEB** said in its decision that it had approved adding nearly $5.2 billion to the **rate** base in connection with the refurbishment of Darlington, which is located approximately 45 minutes east of **Toronto**.

The **OEB** also approved **OPG**'s proposal to spend $292 million on technical assessments for its 46-year-old Pickering nuclear **power** plant, to see if its life can be extended another four years, to 2024. gzochodne@postmedia.com Twitter: @Geoffzochodne

Back to Top

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## OEB Releases Nordicity Report On Wireline Pole Attachments

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Back to Top

---

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Back to Top

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## Ontario's carbon pricing future uncertain

Stratford Beacon-Herald · Sat Dec 30 2017
**Tone:** Positive
**Byline:** Allison Jones

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**Reach:** 10143 **Page:** A1 / Front

**Ontario**'s first year of carbon pricing brought in nearly $2 billion, but uncertainty looms over the program's future as the province faces an election in 2018 that could see its cap-andtrade system replaced with a carbon tax.

The system, launched in 2017, is aimed at lowering greenhouse **gas** emissions by putting caps on the amount of pollution companies in certain industries can emit. If they exceed those limits they must buy allowances at quarterly auctions or from other companies that come in under their limits.

The cap declines about four per cent each year to 2020, and as it decreases, the government hopes companies have more incentive to cut their emissions.

**Ontario** made $1.9 billion this year in four **cap-and-trade** auctions, three of which were sellouts.

But there are concerns that once the province joins the Quebec-California carbon market on Jan. 1, the proceeds from auctions will be lower - at least in the short term - because it will be cheaper for **Ontario** companies to buy allowances in those jurisdictions. That would also mean that greenhouse **gas** emissions won't actually be cut in **Ontario**, according to the province's environmental commissioner and auditor general.

The Liberal government, however, has argued that greenhouse **gases** are emitted into a global atmosphere, so it doesn't matter in what jurisdiction reductions originate.

What happens with the money the program brings in has been a bone of political contention. The government is putting that revenue toward green projects such as **energy** efficient improvements at hospitals, smart thermostats for homeowners, and bike lanes, which they hope will further help to reduce greenhouse **gas** emissions.

The NDP say that green fund is not transparent enough, and the Progressive Conservatives call it a government "cash grab."

The PCs have promised, if they win the June election, to withdraw from **cap and trade** and instead implement a carbon tax, with a key difference between the plans being how to spend the revenue. The Tories propose to use it to fund an income tax cut, which they say would make their carbon tax revenue neutral.

But the Liberals say the capand-trade system gives certainty in emission reductions at the lowest cost.

"(The PC system) is more expensive on a day-to-day basis and there's no guarantee it will actually reduce greenhouse **gas** emissions," Premier Kathleen Wynne said in a recent interview.

The price of carbon through **Ontario**'s 2017 auctions was roughly $18 per tonne. By 2022 the government expects that to rise to over $20, though some forecasts peg it higher.

Under the federal government's carbon tax favoured by the PCs - **Ottawa** has said provinces must choose between **cap and trade** and a carbon tax - the price would be $50 a tonne by 2022.

"This is the federal law," Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said in an interview. "I believe we should do our part on combating **climate** change and I don't think it's inconsistent to be a Progressive Conservative and care about the environment."

Though a carbon tax comes with a higher price per tonne at least in the short term, the Tories say it is more predictable than the price under **cap and trade**, which is dictated by the market and therefore unstable. And their **plan** is to offset the impact on consumers with income tax cuts.

They also **plan** a small business tax cut, but businesses currently covered by **cap and trade** may still end up paying more under a carbon tax.

Those businesses would have an equivalent value of **cap-and-trade** credits honoured in a carbon tax system, and free credits for companies in sensitive industries - a way to prevent them from moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing - would continue, the Tories say.

Linking to the joint carbon market - the first auction will take place on Feb. 21 - isn't expected to substantially drive up costs for consumers, which are currently about 4.3 cents per litre on the price of **gasoline** and about $80 a year on **natural gas** home heating. There are also indirect costs that businesses will pass onto consumers.

Back to Top

## Ontarians suffering because of Wynne's hydro legacy

Toronto Sun - Sun Dec 31 2017
**Tone:** Negative
**Ad Value:** $2,281
**Reach:** 222184 **Page:** A15

As we enter 2018, here's a legacy from her past four years as **Ontario**'s premier that Kathleen Wynne would prefer no one talk about.

It's that since she became premier in February, 2013, there's been a 19% increase in residential **hydro** **disconnections**, a 28% increase in **hydro** accounts in arrears and a 40% hike in **customer** debt owed to provincial **electricity** distributors.

By comparison, the number of customers grew by only 4%, from 4,416,713 in 2013 to 4,598,314 in 2016.

Meanwhile, the number of **hydro** accounts disconnected for non-payment grew from 49,130 to 58,286.

Accounts in arrears increased to 392,963 from 307,822.

Money owed to provincial **utilities** by **hydro** customers in default today totals $134,855,199, compared to $96,461,640 four years ago.

This is hardly surprising given that disastrous Liberal **energy** policies pursued first by former Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty and now Wynne saw **hydro** **rates** double over a decade.

Small wonder **Hydro** One, **Ontario**'s monopoly **electricity** distributor which serves 1.3 million mostly rural customers directly, recently sought permission from the **Ontario Energy Board** to install pre-paid meters in the homes of people having trouble paying their bills.

Wynne sold off majority control of **Hydro** One to the private sector so she could fulfil her promise to balance the province's books in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Except two **independent**, non-partisan, officers of the Legislature - the Auditor General and Financial Accountability Office - say Wynne's books aren't balanced and her government is running another multibillion-dollar deficit this year.

This is what happens when, as two **Ontario** auditors general warned for years, a government ignores the advice of its own **energy** experts in its mad pursuit of so-called "green **energy**", without doing a proper costbenefit analysis or developing a meaningful business **plan**.

None of this was necessary to replace polluting coalfired **electricity**, which is always the Liberals'excuse for their disastrous handling of the **electricity** file.

The Liberals replaced coal **power** using cleaner **nuclear energy** and **natural gas**.

Their mad dash into "renewable" **energy** sources like **wind** and **solar power** wasn't needed to replace coal.

Lysyk said in 2015 it would result in Ontarians overpaying $9.2 billion for **electricity** over 20 years, including twice the average U.S. **rate** for **wind power** and 3.5 times for **solar**.

Today, **Ontario** has a huge **energy** surplus which it has to sell at a loss to neighbouring jurisdictions or dump for no compensation.

The lesson is that when governments ignore the advice of their own experts and make decisions based on ideology rather than common sense, people suffer.

Wynne's pre-election ploy of lowering **hydro** bills by 25% through massive **public** borrowing, that will add billions of dollars to future **hydro** bills, will simply make things worse over the long term.

Which will be another legacy of Wynne's years in **power**.

**Back to Top**

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TILBURY TIMES

## Conservatives plan to change landscape in C-K; Nicholls says 401 barrier will be built; Green Energy Act will be scrapped

Tilbury Times · Tue Jan 2 2018
**Tone:** Neutral
**Byline:** Ellwood Shreve

**Ad Value:** $450
**Reach:** 1169 **Page:** A3

Chatham-Kent will see a concrete change if the **Ontario** Progressive Conservatives are given a mandate to lead after the June provincial election.

In a year-end interview, Chatham-Kent **Essex** MPP Rick Nicholls said he has been told by PC party leader Patrick Brown that "a PC government will build the concrete barrier" along Highway 401 through Chatham-Kent.

The local MPP has been deeply involved in the citizen-driven 'Build the Barrier'campaign - to have a concrete median be installed between Chatham-Kent and **London** in light of some fatal cross median crashes earlier this year along that stretch of Highway 401. The Ministry of **Transportation**'s office has indicated a high-tension cable barrier is being considered for that stretch of highway.

Nicholls said he asked the MTO if they could provide a comparison of the cost for one kilometre of concrete barrier versus one kilometre of high-tension cable.

"They couldn't provide me with that." He also asked, when work was still being done on Highway 401 in the Tilbury area, if the **contract** could be opened to include concrete barriers. Nicholls said he was told it could be done, but added, "the sad part is they did not open that up and now all the barriers are removed."

Now that winter is here, Nicholls has particular concerns with the stretch of 401 from Queen's Line to Highway 40 where there have been several incidents of tractor trailers spinning out through the median.

Meanwhile, Nicholls said he has also been working with Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Monte McNaughton to address the issue of several water wells that have gone turbid in the former Chatham Township area since construction began on a **wind** **turbine** farm in the area.

Nicholls noted the current **Green Energy Act** would be scrapped if Brown is permitted to govern **Ontario**.

"We're not against green (**energy**), but it's got to be affordable **energy**," he said. "We know the cost for these industrial **wind** turbines and the price that people are paying to subsidize these industrial **wind** turbines, is driving the prices of **hydro** up."

The MPP said **Ontario** has among the highest **energy** costs, which is putting a financial strain on many businesses and residents.

The PCs have looked at the numbers, and Nicholls said in addition to the 25 per cent reduction offered by the Liberal government, "we will actually lower **energy** costs by additional 12 per cent." He said this will be done through efficiencies and looking at the various contracts that municipalities and the Liberal government have signed with **wind** **turbine** companies, to find loopholes.

When it comes to lowering the cost of government, Nicholls said the PCs are looking to find "two pennies on every dollar spent, in efficiencies."

Some people may see that as cutting services, but Nicholls said, "no it's not. We're going to find better ways of doing things, to streamline, to make it more efficient without cutting."

He added any surplus at the end of the year will go directly to start paying down the debt, which now amounts to just under $330 billion.

"We do not have a revenue problem in this province, we have a spending problem," Nicholls said.

Asked if PC measures to streamline and find efficiencies will cause people to compare it to the former Mike Harris government, Nicholls said: "They can point to the Mike Harris days and we can point to the Bob Rae days and we can point to the Dalton McGuinty days. How far back do people want to go?" Nicholls predicts when the **Ontario** Legislature resumes sitting in February, the Liberals will introduce a provincial budget that will be the basis of its election platform.

"My concern and my advice to the **public**, to my constituents and to Ontarians, is don't be fooled by this budget."

Nicholls points to 2003 and 2007 as two occasions when former Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to not raise taxes, but then did.

**Back to Top**

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## Alberta carbon tax jumps, but NDP says it's connected to improving economy

Financial Post - Mon Jan 1 2018
**Tone:** Neutral
**Byline:** The Canadian Press
**Reach:** 607500

EDMONTON - Alberta's carbon tax jumped on New Year's Day, but the province's NDP government maintains the tax played a vital role in Alberta's improving economic outlook.

Deputy premier Sarah Hoffman told reporters there was a clear link between the approval of several pipelines last year and the tax that Alberta first introduced on carbon on January 1, 2017.

Hoffman noted the federal government was clear that its approval for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion from Alberta to the B.C. coast was due to Alberta putting a price on carbon, as well as other pieces of its climate change policy.

Alberta's carbon levy jumped from $20 per tonne to $30 per tonne on Monday, which Hoffman says will mean an extra two-and-a-half cents per litre at the gas pumps.

Opposition Leader Jason Kenney of the United Conservative Party posted a video to social media on New Year's Eve where he gassed up his truck before the hike, similar to a video he posted last year where he did the same thing.

Kenney says the tax has already killed thousands of good paying jobs, put entrepreneurs out of business and made life more expensive for families.

"The carbon tax is all economic pain with no environmental gain," Kenney said Monday in a statement.

The province says revenue from the levy, which also includes a tax on heating bills, will continue to be invested in green infrastructure, encouraging Albertans to be energy efficient and renewable energy.

It says low- and middle-income Albertans will also see an increase in rebates the province provides to offset the carbon tax.

Hoffman noted that 2017 continued to be "tough," but said Alberta has "definitely rounded the corner" and that there were "tens of thousands of new jobs."

The government said a couple with two children earning up to $95,000 per year will receive a rebate of $540.

"I don't think it has been as shocking to Albertans on the cost side as many would want you to believe it would be. It hasn't necessarily been easy. Any time you're paying a bit more, it's a challenge," Hoffman said.

"But we've done it in a way that protects ordinary Albertans and gets us that very important environmental leadership profile that we need to ensure we have a strong economy for future generations."

Kenney, however, noted that since the NDP announced its climate change plan, the prime minister vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline proposal, former U.S. president Barack Obama vetoed Keystone XL and the National Energy Board effectively killed Energy East.

He added the NDP government in B.C. was also trying to stop Trans Mountain from proceeding.

"Not one single government, party or special interest group has gone from 'no' to 'yes' on pipelines as a result of the NDP's failed tax on everything," Kenney said in the statement.

Kenney also repeated a point that the Opposition has made since the tax was first announced - that the NDP never mentioned a carbon tax during the 2015 election campaign. But in his video, Kenney's message was that the NDP told Albertans they wouldn't introduce a tax.

"This is the carbon tax they claimed they had no intention of imposing in the last provincial election," Kenney said in the video.

UCP spokeswoman Annie Dormuth said Monday that both messages are the same.

"There is no discrepancy. The NDP implementing a carbon tax they never mentioned during the campaign is a lie by omission," Dormuth said in an email.

Hoffman responded the NDP was clear during the 2015 campaign that it was going to take leadership on the environment and that it was working on details of a plan.

"Jason Kenney says a lot of things I find unusual or are contrary to the reality that we're all living in," she said. "He's been cheering for Alberta to fail and he wants to pretend that only he can put the economy on the right track."

Back to Top

## How Alberta achieved Canada's lowest renewable-electricity prices

The Globe and Mail - Mon Jan 1 2018
**Tone:** Neutral

On Dec. 13, Premier Rachel Notley announced that Alberta set a new record by procuring the lowest priced renewable electricity in Canada.

Back to Top

## Alberta issues alert, natural gas outages in north during extreme cold snap

National Post - Sat Dec 30 2017
**Tone:** Neutral
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EDMONTON - Alberta's Emergency Management Agency has issued an alert about natural gas outages affecting people who live in the north as the region deals with frigid temperatures.

The agency says the extreme cold weather has disrupted the supply of gas to the Mackenzie County area.

People who can't heat their homes are being encouraged to stay with friends and family who have alternative heat sources.

The agency says natural gas supply trucks are being brought in to try and maintain gas line pressure, but the problem is expected to continue until temperatures rise.

A reception centre is open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in La Crete, a hamlet about 700 kilometres north of Edmonton.

Environment Canada is reporting temperatures at the High Level airport of -38 C, -48 C with the wind chill, and there is more extreme cold weather in the forecast.

"At this point we are requesting that all natural gas users within the region limit their usage as much as possible," the county said in a post on Facebook Friday.

"This will help gas reach the end of the line and prevent additional houses from freezing."

The Mackenzie County website says about 12,000 people live in the remote area that includes the communities of La Crete, Fort Vermilion and High Level.

Len Racher, the county's chief administrative officer, said as a precaution the hospital in Fort Vermilion has switched over to diesel for heat and a long-term care home in La Crete has switched to propane.

He said officials have warming centres and buses ready if needed.

Racher said officials are focusing on maintaining **service** to the communities where most people live.

"We have everything under control at this point. Nobody is in any kind of imminent danger," he said in an interview.

"Should it get worse we have plans in place to ramp up if we have to start moving people around."

Racher said local officials and the provincial government are doing a good job dealing with the **natural gas** shortage.

There was no immediate estimate on how many people were without heat.

"A few people have lost (their heat) but they are **northern** people and they have wood stoves and are used to some blips here and there," he said.

"We have prepared for the worst case scenario. With what is being done I don't think that will happen, but knock on wood, right?"

Racher said the shortage and outages point to the need for another pipeline to supply the region with **natural gas**.

Back to Top

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## Companies tout renewable energy projects for Massachusetts

Financial Post - Mon Jan 1 2018
**Tone:** Positive
**Byline:** The Associated Press
**Reach:** 607500

MONTPELIER, Vt. - Some entrepreneurs hoping to provide **renewable energy** to Massachusetts **electricity** customers are touting their projects in the run-up to the decision, expected in late January, about which company could be chosen to help provide clean **power** to the **Bay** State.

The stakes are potentially huge for the dozens of companies that have submitted proposals, some of which are proposing major infrastructure projects that would carry **Canadian** **electricity** produced by **wind** or **hydro** **power** across Vermont, New Hampshire or Maine to reach Massachusetts.

While there are a variety of projects vying to be chosen by Massachusetts in the current round, even if they're not selected, it's likely there will other calls in the future for projects to provide more renewable **power** to southern New England.

Last week, the backers of New Hampshire's **Northern** Pass project, which would run a 192-mile **transmission** line from Pittsburg on the **Canadian** border to Deerfield, carrying enough hydropower to about a million homes, were optimistic.

Despite a vow of continued pressure from people who object to the **Northern** Pass project, the backer of the project Eversource expects to receive final regulatory approval in both the United States and Canada, allowing it to begin construction in April. **Northern** Pass claims it will be ready to transmit **power** by 2020.

"We feel we have submitted the most mature project," said Eversource spokeswoman Kaitlyn Woods. "We are confident it will be selected."

National Grid, the backer of the project known as the Granite State **Power** Link, is running online advertisements promoting its project. The company announced last week it had filed for a presidential permit, the first regulatory step needed for it to bring 1,200 megawatts of **power** to southern New England.

The project would be built alongside an existing line that enters the United States at Norton, Vermont, and connect with an upgraded **power** line at Monroe, New Hampshire. It's unclear when that project could be ready for construction.

"I think we're well positioned to win because ultimately we are the best options for customers," said National Grid's Joe Rossignoli. In addition to the Granite State **Power** Link, National Grid is backing a smaller project that would bring **power** from new **wind** and **solar** projects from upstate New York to Massachusetts.

Another proposed project, the New England Clean **Power** Link, would carry **power** 154 miles down Lake Champlain from the **Canadian** border and into Vermont, where it would connect to the grid and feed Massachusetts' demand for clean **power**. The project is backed by TDI-New England.

"In addition to meeting all the Commonwealth's requirements, TDI-NE believes the New England Clean **Power** Link is the right turn-key project for Massachusetts," said Donald Jessome, president of TDI-New England. "Our project is fully permitted, enjoys wide spread support up and down the line and offers a fixed price bid."

In 2016, Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker signed a law requiring the state to solicit contracts for 1,200 megawatts of **renewable energy**, including hydropower, onshore **wind** and **solar power**, along with at least 1,600 megawatts of offshore **wind energy**.

Last summer, dozens of companies filed proposals - large and small - to meet that goal for the onshore supply of **power**. The timeline calls for the "selection of projects for negotiation" on Jan. 25 with the contracts being approved by late April.

In Maine, the **utility** Central Maine **Power** has proposed working with two **Canadian energy** suppliers to move **Canadian electricity** along more than 90 miles of existing CMP corridors and 51 miles of newly purchased rights of way in western Maine.

"We think these are the two best ideas," CMP President Sara Burns said last summer when the proposals were released.

Back to Top

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## Hydro Blues

Toronto Sun - Sun Dec 31 2017
**Tone:** Negative
**Byline:** Irene Cord

**Ad Value:** $566
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When my children attended day school, I had a full-time day job. I did my housework, laundry, etc. in the evenings or Saturdays. Now that I'm retired, I would like to do my laundry and ironing in the daytime when I have more **energy**, but because of the high cost of **hydro**, I continue to do these chores in the evenings as when I was employed. This is so we can sell our **energy** to others cheaply or give it away for next to nothing. **Ontario** has bet on the wrong "horse". What's wrong with this picture?

IRENE CORD

**TORONTO**

(According to Premier Kathleen Wynne and the **Ontario** Liberals, absolutely nothing)

**Back to Top**