Infomart Newsletters

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Morning News Clippings

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Date: Thursday, December 28, 2017
Edited by: Paul Crawford (Paul.Crawford@oeb.ca)

Contact Editor

Clippings Summary

News - 8 Results

Speak up before the rules change; Ontario Energy Board reviewing customer service rules

Sudbury Star - Thu Dec 28 2017
Tone: Positive
Ad Value: $558
Reach: 14934 **Page:** A4

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Tone: Neutral
Byline: Toby Barrett

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Full Articles

Speak up before the rules change; Ontario Energy Board reviewing customer service rules

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The **Ontario Energy Board** encouraging all **energy** consumers to have their say about **customer service rules** for the **electricity** and **natural gas** sectors.

The board has launched a survey at www.**oeb**.ca/customerservicesurvey, where residential and small business consumers can give their opinion on a number of **customer service rules**, including: Are there times when customers should not be disconnected? Should low-income customers have to pay security deposits? What is a reasonable amount of time for customers to pay their **energy** bills? "Whether you're an **electricity** or **natural gas customer**, this is your opportunity to have your say," says **Rosemarie Leclair**, **OEB** chair and CEO.

"Your feedback is vital in ensuring **OEB**'s **rules** strike the right balance between **consumer** protection and the operational needs of **energy utilities**."

The survey is part of a sweeping **review** of **customer service rules** the board launched in May. It's also consulting with **energy utilities** as part of its **review**.

The board implemented a number of **customer service rules** to protect the interests of consumers about five years ago. It is now conducting a **review** of those **rules** and says the feedback it receives will help shape those **rules** in the future.

The board has had **customer service rules** in place for **electricity utilities** since 2011. **Natural gas utilities** regulated by the board were required to implement and publish residential **customer service** policies a year later. Their policies cover the major areas addressed by the board's **electricity** sector **rules**.

Most of the board's **customer service rules** for **electricity utilities** also apply to unit sub-meter providers, which are companies that provide metering and billing services for some condominiums or apartments that have their own individual meters. The province's recently released long-term **energy plan** has signalled it will give the board **greater** authority over unit sub-meter providers, making feedback more important as the board proceeds with the **review**.

To find out more about **customer service rules** for **electricity utilities** and unit sub-meter providers, go to www.**oeb**.ca/consumerprotection/ **rules**-**electricity**-**utilities**, and for **natural gas utilities**, go to www.**oeb**.ca/**consumer**-protection/**service**-policies -naturalgas -**utilities**.

Consumers who have a complaint about their **energy utilities** can submit it online at www.**oeb**.ca/**consumer**-protection/make -complaint. They can also phone the board (toll-free) at 1-877-632-2727. sud.editorial@sunmedia.ca

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Union Gas rates drop in the New Year

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The **Ontario Energy Board** has approved a **natural gas rate** decrease for **Union**

Gas company customers. This is applies to natural gas customers in Timmins and Northeastern Ontario. The new rates will be effective Jan. 1, 2018.

Residential1 customers who purchase natural gas from Union Gas will see the following changes: North East Ontario a decrease of about $6 a year, or less than 1 percent of the total natural gas bill.

Southern Ontario a decrease of about $28 a year, or about 4 per cent of the total natural gas bill.

North West Ontario a decrease of about $24 a year, or about 2 per cent of the total natural gas bill.

These rate changes mean the average annual bill for a residential household is between $783 and $1,058 depending on location. (South $783, North West: $946; North East $1,058), said a company news release. To view current rate information by postal code, visit uniongas.com/residentialrates.

"Now that winter is here, Union Gas customers can expect an affordable and reliable supply of natural gas with no fillups needed even in the harshest winter months," remarked Union Gas vice president Jim Redford, in the news release.

Customer rates are adjusted quarterly, without markup, to reflect changes in the market price of natural gas supplies, said the release. Union Gas is committed to improving energy efficiency and cost savings through a range of tools and education to help customers manage their energy use. For example, the Home Weatherization Program helps incomeeligible customers receive free home energy upgrades. This program has helped over 9,700 Ontario households save money and energy.

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Pre-paid plan morally repugnant

Chatham This Week - Thu Dec 28 2017
Tone: Negative **Page:** A6

The Wynne government's assurance that a proposal by privately controlled Hydro One to install pre-paid electricity meters for people who are behind in their payments will be voluntary warrants great suspicion.

Hydro One's submission to the Ontario Energy Board, seeking regulatory approval for its "collection enhancements" plan - buried on Page 2,038 of a 2,076-page document - doesn't specify it will be voluntary.

Rather, it argues that the increasing number of customers in default because of the rising cost of electricity justifies installing pre-paid meters as a way of "minimizing Hydro One Network's financial risk."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault says Hydro One has assured him the program will be a voluntary method for its customers to control their electricity consumption, and in any event may not be approved.

But Thibeault's response came only after New Democrat MPP Peter Tabuns said the plan is designed to target the poor.

It's not surprising that Hydro One wants to minimize non-payment for its services.

But the idea that senior citizens living on fixed incomes could be forced into paying in advance for electricity after the Liberal government's mismanagement drove electricity prices in Ontario to the highest level in the country, is both morally repugnant and indefensible.

The fear is that people unable to pay their bills in advance will have their power cut off - a frightening prospect as we enter into winter - despite Hydro One's insistence that won't happen.

Its insistence is small comfort, given the utility's appallingly bad and incompetent history of billing customers, as identified by former Ontario ombudsman Andre Marin in the era before Premier Kathleen Wynne sold off the province's control of Hydro One to the private sector - a move that put the utility beyond the scrutiny of the ombudsman.

Marin reported on thousands of complaints from Hydro One customers. Many were overbilled and had their bank accounts raided to pay for electricity they never used. They were then refused reimbursement by the utility, which said it would only apply over-billed amounts to future hydro bills.

For that reason alone, the Ontario Energy Board should reject this proposal.

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Steep electricity costs cannot go on

Delhi News-Record - Thu Dec 28 2017
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Byline: Toby Barrett

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For years, I have been railing against the high cost of electricity - full disclosure, I heat with hydro, which means I go through 10 to 20 cords of wood a winter. Ontario now has the fastest-rising electricity costs in North America, and the highest rates in Canada. This cannot go on.

We as Opposition have proposed measures to lower the average hydro bill an additional 12 per cent on top off the existing 25 per cent reduction.

The annual Hydro One dividend should be rebated to ratepayers instead of using the $350 million a year for government projects. Conservation programs are worthwhile but they should be funded from general revenues.

Under the Green Energy Act, Feed-in Tariff (FIT) contracts have led to exorbitant subsidies for generating power that is simply not needed or could have been generated in other less expensive ways. We must use every legal and feasible opportunity to renegotiate or exit contracts at every contract breach, whether it be missed operational deadlines or permit violations.

Where feasible, we must walk away from committed capacity contracts that have cancellation benefits, like pre-notice to proceed contracts that were struck under the Green Energy Act, thus avoiding already scheduled rate increases.

The Smart Meter Charge is intended to pay for the province's data centre, although the auditor general has found that 812,000 of the 4.8 million homes with smart meters have not transmitted any data. This smart meter charge - at $1 billion over budget -should come off immediately.

Ontario ratepayers are now paying for a CEO who makes over $4 million a year.

That's six times what the old CEO at Hydro One used to make. We must reign in exorbitant executive salaries at both Hydro One and OPG.

The CD Howe Institute charges Green Energy Act policies have "had a dramatic impact on electricity costs in the province, but they have generated very limited environmental benefits and have had a negligible-to-negative effect on economic growth and employment." As we've been saying since its inception, it's time to repeal the Green Energy Act.

Green energy is a good thing, but paying unaffordable rates for power we don't need, and forcing projects on unwilling host municipalities is wrong. As we have said many times in Opposition, we will restore local planning authority over wind and solar and force government to present the environmental impact of their decisions.

Energy planning decisions in Ontario are made by political staff instead of by the energy experts at the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO). Any future long-term energy plans must be brought before a legislative committee to be studied in depth, in public, and with the Minister of Energy and the expert staff at IESO and other core agencies required to give advice or explain their decisions.

Ontario's IESO must be required to report on potential options - rooted in evidence - to reduce the amount of hydroelectric power the province wastes annually.

The Ontario Energy Board must be reformed to reduce red tape, drive costs out of the system, and create a flexible regulatory body.

We should proceed with nuclear refurbishment in Ontario and keep Pickering Nuclear Generating Station open until 2024.

Fourteen years of mismanagement, recklessness, and politically-driven decisions have left families, seniors and business owners paying more. This cannot go on. Toby Barrett is the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk

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United Way's Dobbyn named to IESO working group

KincardineNews

Kincardine News - Thu Dec 28 2017
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United Way of Bruce-Grey executive director Francesca Dobbyn is the newest member of the Independent Electricity System Operator's (IESO) Market Renewal Working Group.

The organization is tasked with providing advice to the IESO as it works with stakeholders to renew the wholesale electricity market in Ontario.

Dobbyn will be representing the interests of the low-volume, or residential, consumer.

"We're delighted to have Ms.

Dobbyn on the Market Renewal Working Group," said Chuck Farmer, Director, Stakeholder and Public Affairs. "The skills and experience she brings will mean she will be an important asset to the work being done by this group, and help ensure that the views of residential consumers are represented as we renew Ontario's electricity market."

The IESO is making changes to the electricity market that will ensure it functions more efficiently and is prepared for the electricity sector of tomorrow. These efforts will help provide a level playing field for all electricity resources, including emerging technologies, to compete and provide electricity when and where it's needed. Market renewal is expected to result in an estimated net benefit of up to $5.2 billion over 10 years, the majority of which will be realized by consumers.

Dobbyn has been championing the needs of her community as executive director of the Bruce-Grey United Way for more than 13 years.

For some time, she has been working with policy makers to find solutions to high **energy** costs for Ontarians.

The **IESO** manages the province's **power** system so that Ontarians receive **power** when and where they need it. It plans and prepares for future **electricity** needs and works with its partners to guide conservation efforts.

For more information visit www.**ieso**.ca.

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Provincial, municipal politics need cleaning

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Ontarians face two major elections in 2018 - on June 7 to elect a provincial government and on Oct. 22 to elect municipal councils across the province.

What voters are going to have to decide is, do we want more of the same? Some useful questions to ask are: Are you better off now than you were four years ago? Are you happy with the progress being made on major issues such as **public** transit? Do the politicians who represent you spend their time working on things you care about, or they care about? After almost 15 years in **power**, **Ontario**'s Liberal government is looking spent, politically corrupt force that has left the province's finances in chaos.

It's so bad two **independent**, non-partisan officers of the legislature - the auditor general and Financial Accountability Office - say the books can't be trusted. That the government of Premier Kathleen Wynne is running a multibillion-dollar deficit, despite claims of a balanced budget.

Wynne's solution to massive **hydro** bills, created in large part by the Liberals' bungling of the **electricity** file, is to kick the problem down the road. Which will result in Ontarians paying billions of dollars more than necessary on their **electricity** bills over the long term, according to auditor general Bonnie Lysyk.

We know Wynne's re-election strategy.

Keep her allies in the big **public** sector unions happy with generous, already signed, labour contracts.

Spend millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on politically partisan government advertising that would not have been allowed, according to Lysyk, under a law Wynne scrapped.

Accuse Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown of being a right-wing ideologue (ridiculous given Brown's election platform) while warning a vote for the NDP's Andrea Horwath is a vote for Brown.

Municipally, the issue isn't just who will win the mayors' races, but what kind of councils will they have? Even more than in provincial elections, the **rules** for running municipally massively favour incumbents.

So without a major voter revolt, doing nothing will mean accepting the status quo.

We need politicians who care about what voters care about: Good **public** services delivered as efficiently as possible.

But we won't get it without a major political housecleaning in 2018.

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Defeating Trudeau

Toronto Sun - Thu Dec 28 2017
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Re "Justin Trudeau's dwindling support is a wake up" (Editorial, Dec. 18): While showing a lack of leadership on major trade deals by wanting to incorporate his progressive agenda in them, running up massive deficits and debts, by pushing ideologically driven projects, bringing in a job-killing national carbon tax, and not supporting the Energy East Pipeline to cater to Quebec, Trudeau's support should be dwindling. His top priorities have been campaigning and fundraising, while taking selfies, and legalizing pot. Trudeau enjoys the luxury of having two basically unknown leaders of the Conservatives and NDP. Neither party can seriously challenge its native son in Quebec. If the NDP cannot up its game and erode Liberal support, the Conservatives have zero chance of replacing Trudeau in two years.

LARRY COMEAU

OTTAWA

(Politics moves in cycles and right now the cycle favours Trudeau. It won't last forever, it never does)

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Massive wind project sets milestones

The Sault Star - Thu Dec 28 2017
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An international energy company has secured $1 billion in financing to build the largest wind project in Ontario on a reserve south of Sudbury.

Pattern Development revealed plans recently to construct a 300-megawatt wind project located on Henvey Inlet First Nation Reserve No. 2 on the northeast shore of the Georgian Bay.

Pattern Development and Nigig Power Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Henvey Inlet First Nation, are joint venture partners in the project.

"This landmark project is a first on many fronts: largest wind project in Ontario, largest on-reserve wind installation in Canada, highest hub heights in North America, and the first to develop a First Nation Environmental Stewardship Regime under the First Nations Lands Management Act," Mike Garland, CEO of Pattern Development, said in a release. "We are proud to be partners with Henvey Inlet First Nation. Together we're excited to kick off construction on this historic project that will harness the strong and steady winds blowing across the Georgian Bay to create hundreds of local jobs and provide a significant new source of revenue for Henvey Inlet First Nation."

Henvey Inlet First Nation is an Anishinabek community comprised of three separate reserve properties. Henvey Inlet Reserve No. 2 is on the northeast shore of the Georgian Bay, 90 km south of Sudbury and 71 km north of Parry Sound. French River Reserve No. 13 is 11 km north of the Reserve No. 2 and includes Cantin Island. There are about 900 enrolled members of the Robinson-**Huron** Treaty band, with about 200 of those residing on-reserve.

"This will be the first **wind** **power** project on First Nation land, representing an economic turning point in which we are creating a prosperous future," said Chief Wayne McQuabbie of Henvey Inlet First Nation. "This project's watershed permitting and **real estate** regime sets an example for responsible economic development that protects and preserves First Nation land while also generating revenue for future generations. The project also benefits Magnetawan and Shawanaga First Nations with income and employment opportunities."

Magnetawan and Shawanaga are located near Henvey Inlet.

Nigig **Power** **Corporation** is wholly owned by Henvey Inlet First Nation. Nigig was mandated in 2010 to develop the Henvey Inlet **Wind** project, intended to provide economic benefits for community and the surrounding area. The net proceeds will be managed by a community trust that will conduct extensive consultation to determine the use of funds through a membership referendum.

"We aren't just building a **wind** farm, we're building an economy," said Ken Noble, President and CEO, Nigig **Power** **Corporation**. "The net proceeds over the next two decades of operations will provide the financial resources to transform the local economy, expand all community services, relieve poverty, and create employment."

Henvey Inlet **Wind** will use 87 Vestas 3.45 MW turbines with a 136-metre rotor diameter and 132-metre hub height. The project has a 20-year **power** purchase agreement with the **Independent** **Electricity** System Operator (**IESO**) for 100 per cent of its production.

The project will create up to 500 jobs during construction. Once operational, the project will employ about 15 permanent full-time workers and also create more than 100 ongoing indirect jobs.

Once operational in the first half of 2019, Henvey Inlet **Wind** will generate clean **power** for approximately 100,000 **Ontario** homes each year. It is expected to generate lease royalties of more than $8 million annually for the Henvey Inlet First Nation, in addition to significant income from project distributions.

Henvey Inlet **Wind** is being jointly developed and will continue to be jointly owned and operated by Pattern Development and Henvey Inlet First Nation. Pattern Development owns a 50 per cent interest in the project, and Nigig **Power** **Corporation** owns the other half.

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