Infomart Newsletters

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Morning News Clippings

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Date: Thursday, February 1, 2018
Edited by: Paul Crawford (Paul.Crawford@oeb.ca)

Contact Editor

Clippings Summary

News - 9 Results

Westario customers not concerned about potential rate hike; Other issues raised at public meeting

Hanover Post - Thu Feb 1 2018
Tone: Neutral
Byline: Don Crosby

Ad Value: $692
Reach: 15209 **Page:** A2

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Powering Ontario

National Post - Thu Feb 1 2018
Tone: Positive
Byline: Colin Anderson

Ad Value: $3,076
Reach: 159480 **Page:** A10

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Byline: The Canadian Press
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Energy East is mentioned.

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Click image to download In the push to normalize **electric** vehicles, many forget it's not the end of the road as far as environmental impact is concerned. Presumably, those using **electric** vehicles or hybrids are motivated by a ...

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Full Articles

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Westario Power customers didn't appear concerned about the **utility**'s **application** to the **Ontario Energy Board** for a slight raise in its **electricity distribution rate**, but had other questions at a recent meeting in Walkerton.

The increase amounts to $2.78 more a month for a typical residential **customer**.

About two dozen people turned out for the community meeting in Walkerton Wednesday to ask the **independent energy** sector **regulator** and **Westario Power** staff questions about the **application** and provide comments during and question and answer period.

Dave Leonce, vice-president of operations at **Westario Power**, explained that the **rate** increase is needed to maintain the **utility**'s infrastructure. He agreed that the **rate** increase doesn't appear to be a concern for customers.

"I think our **application** speaks for itself," Leonce said.

Dian Foxton of Teeswater said she has tried all the conservation measures suggested to lower **power** use, but is not seeing any reduction in her **hydro** bill.

"We're quite in tune with the **time of use rates**, using the dishwasher, dryer and all those high-demand appliances on the low-demand times and not really seeing any major changes; we're done, we're at our limit right now. We can't do any more," she said.

Francesca Dobbyn, executive director of the United Way of Bruce Grey, said there is a new program called the Affordability Fund that for people who do not qualify for low-income programs.

She described it as a program for higher income earners with high energy costs.

"They've done the light bulb thing, maybe they need windows, maybe they need insulation. It also works for tenants as well as homeowners," she said.

Dobbyn said capital improvement and depreciation are issues facing utilities but, she expects that the Fair Hydro plan initiated by the government in 2017 will step in if the increases are greater than inflation.

Foxton said she thought Westario made a strong case for its rate increase.

"They have a product to sell and they have to keep up with infrastructure, that's just a given. They are not talking about increasing wages, or increased compensation, they are talking strictly the replacement… I'm quite comfortable with that. I think it all makes sense. The money has to come from someplace," she said.

The OEB has just begun reviewing Westario Power's rate application. Reviews typically take between six and nine months to allow the regulator time to properly examine all of the evidence in the case. The timeline also provides customers of the utility, stakeholders and other interested parties to be heard by the OEB.

"The utility has to prove to the OEB that it needs a rate increase," said James Sidlofsky, legal counsel for the OEB. He noted utilities rarely get all they ask for.

He said that that between 2009 and 2016 the OEB reviewed more than 130 major rate applications and reduced requested rate increases by an average of 40 per cent.

"Overall, the OEB has kept the annual growth in the average distribution rates close to the rate of inflation over the same period," Sidlofsky, said.

He said since 2016, the OEB has held more than 30 community meetings. Feedback from community meetings helps information the OEB's final rate decision.

The amounts requested by Westario Power in its application to the OEB relate to its distribution business and does not reflect any credits or other changes resulting from the Fair Hydro Act of 2017.

Westario is an electricity provider to 15 communities in Grey, Bruce and Wellington counties.

George Bridge, chair of Westario's board of directors, said he would like to see a better way to mediate close boundary disputes between Westario and Hydro One as the two utilities expand their coverage areas.

He said it's difficult to get the provincial utility to give up territory to Westario as the service areas grow and neighbours are faced with different hydro rates.

"I think it should all come back to what is best for the consumer. At one time Hydro One may have been the only that had the infrastructure there; I understand they don't want to give it up but at the same token, what is best for the consumer?" he said.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker said he thought it was good for people to attend OEB public meetings which provide the opportunity to see how the regulator works and how these type of applications go forward.

"People in the room were trying to figure out what the energy policy is and where that is coming from… there were a lot of questions about how do I save money and what was not being told tonight," he said.

Walker said hydro bills aren't going down because the government is buying some electricity produced by wind energy and solar at rates higher than the three cents a kilowatt hour from Niagara Falls or six cents from Bruce Power.

That is policy decision of the government and the government wasn't there to answer those questions, said Walker. He said Westario was running a pretty tight ship.

"As Westario has said in its rate application, if you want safe reliable, consistent energy they have to make sure their infrastructure is in place."

"At the end of the day you have to separate the two components. They are running a distribution company, that's their business, most people's concern is how much energy they use and the cost to the portion of their bill," said Walker.

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Powering Ontario

National Post - Thu Feb 1 2018
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Re: How to worsen Ontario's power plan, Parker Gallant, Jan. 25 Some of what Mr. Gallant says about electricity pricing in Ontario is absolutely correct and some of it requires clarification. Mr. Gallant correctly sets out that Ontario has some of the highest electricity rates in North America. This was the point of my column (The power to kill us ... or help us, Dec. 12), which responded to statements made within the province's recently released Long Term Energy Plan. Mr. Gallant also correctly identifies that certain Class A customers pay a lower proportion of global adjustment costs than Class B customers - "certain" because only some Class A customers can participate. However, Mr. Gallant fails to highlight that those same Class A customers modify their operations (at significant cost) to shed large amounts of load during the province's peak demand days. According to the Independent Electricity System Operator, this program is responsible for shedding approximately 1200 MW of demand on those days when the province needs the most power. When the program was implemented, it deferred the need to build new nuclear generation, and avoided costs in the billions of dollars. In short, the program did exactly what it was supposed to do - and those Class A customers are responsible for that system benefit.

Finally, Mr. Gallant presumes that I want the Fair Hydro Plan expanded to industrial customers. I do not. I just want fair hydro rates.

Ultimately, we both seem to agree on one common element - Ontario needs more competitive electricity rates. There seems to be a lot of support for that.

Colin Anderson, President

Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario

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Pipelines, not carbon taxes, bigger factor in energy competitivess: report

Financial Post - Thu Feb 1 2018
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OTTAWA - Canada's oil and gas producers are struggling to stay competitive with their U.S. counterparts because of the struggle to expand pipeline capacity, says a new report from the C.D. Howe Institute.

The analysis by associate director of research Benjamin Dachis is the first in what he says will become an annual comparison of Canada's oil and gas sector with its North American equivalents.

The report comes just days before the federal government is expected to unveil how it plans to overhaul the environmental and regulatory review process for major energy projects.

Industry expects that overhaul to be the make-or-break plan for future pipeline projects, and Dachis says the lack of pipelines to transport oil and gas to market remains the biggest factor affecting the industry's competitiveness with the U.S.

"If Canadian governments allowed pipelines to be built expeditiously, the competitiveness of western Canadian oil producers would be greatly improved," he wrote.

While carbon taxes are getting the lion's share of political and public attention, they're having little negative effect, Dachis said - and indeed, if they are well-designed, can actually create an incentive to cut emissions without affecting competitiveness.

A lack of pipeline capacity for getting product to market, on the other hand, has a significant impact, Dachis said, with estimates that the bottleneck cuts about $5 off the profits of every barrel of oil produced in an average western Canadian well.

The analysis looks only at conventional oil and gas wells and not the oilsands, the economics of which are far different and don't compare to conventional oil wells in the U.S., he said.

"This is where a lot of emerging oil and gas investment is going," said Dachis. "It's where the magic is happening."

Canada has watched several pipeline projects evaporate in the last year, including TransCanada's Energy East pipeline between Alberta and the east coast, the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline from the Beaufort Sea, and the Northwest LNG project in B.C.

Proponents in all three cases cited regulatory holdups as one of the reasons for the demise of the projects, although regulation was only one factor.

"The regulatory process sure didn't help, but at the end of the day, market forces probably made the decision," Dachis said.

The plummeting price of natural gas made new pipelines less economical. In the case of Energy East, the arguments for it became less forceful when the U.S. revived the once-moribund Keystone XL pipeline.

Dachis said Keystone, the Trans Mountain expansion between Alberta and B.C. and the Enbridge Line 3 replacement comprise a lot of new capacity that would make the argument for Energy East tougher to make.

Trans Mountain's expansion, which would triple the capacity of the oil pipeline, is in question again after the B.C. government proposed new limits on shipments of bitumen through the province.

The regulations could block the expansion altogether. The B.C. government opposes it, but Alberta Premier Rachel Notley has said she will sue B.C. over the regulations. Notley said B.C. is overstepping its authority and that the regulation will hurt the **Canadian** economy.

Federal Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr restated his government's support for the project earlier this week. The Liberal government approved the project in 2016.

The federal Liberals have spent the last two years consulting on how to overhaul the regulatory and environmental reviews for major **energy** projects, arguing the process needed to be more transparent and more **fair**.

Legislation is anticipated next week on the matter.

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Council votes to amend solar contract near Fenelon Falls

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A small **solar** farm project, approved by Kawartha Lakes council several months ago, has some councillors concerned they could lose control over where other similar projects are built.

Last June, council bucked a recent trend in allowing for a rural **solar** farm to be developed just **north** of Fenelon Falls on Northline Road. Tim Burke of Evergreen **Power** Limited went before council suggesting that more stringent regulations regarding esthetic applications for **solar** farms make it easier for nearby landowners to welcome the developments into their neighbourhoods.

Council eventually approved the **application**, and at the same time accepted a $10,000 donation from the company, which the city used to fund the newly-constructed splash pad next to the beach in Fenelon Falls.

On Tuesday, more than six months after approving the project, it was back before council with the proponent looking to tweak some of the **contract**'s wording. Council used the opportunity to tweak it just a little further.

When it was originally proposed, the issue had council split. Ward 16 Coun. Heather Stauble spoke against the project fearing plans could change following approval. It would have a major impact on the site and she urged council not to support it.

Ward 7 Coun. Brian Junkin, whose ward housed the proposed **solar** farm, said the city has been consistent in not supporting big **solar** projects. There have been many deputations from **public** saying they don't want **solar** projects in rural areas, he said.

On Tuesday, Coun. Junkin tried to quash the project altogether, saying Burke had told council there was support from area residents but he knew of some who still opposed the **solar** farm.

When council heard that the proponent needed to change some wording to make the project compliant with legal requirements, Coun. Stauble suggested the city change some of the wording as well.

She specifically was concerned with one paragraph that states "and whereas the supplier previously requested that the council of the local municipality indicate by resolution council's support for the construction and operation of the project on the lands or all projects with the same renewable fuel anywhere in the local municipality ...

"At very least, do not include that line. It is a bad move," Stauble said. "If we're going to approve this for 390 Northline Rd., we should say that and not anywhere in municipality."

In a recorded vote, with only Mayor Andy Letham, Ward 11 Coun. Pat O'Reilly, and Ward 5 Coun. Steve Strangway voting against, council agreed to change the wording of the **contract**.

City chief administrative officer Ron Taylor told council that its wishes would be forwarded to the proponent.

He could not say whether it would jeopardize the project, but if need be, it could came back to council again.

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Chatham This Week

Anti-wind groups take legal action; Citizen groups say several large wind developments allowed to use older standards

Chatham This Week · Thu Feb 1 2018
Tone: Negative
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
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The discovery that some large wind developments across Ontario are not being held to new provincial noise emission requirements has prompted four citizen groups to take legal action.

"Essentially, we feel like we are collateral damage in this whole Green Energy Act, to be perfectly honest, and that's not right," said Bonnie Rowe, spokesperson for the Dutton Dunwich Opponents of Wind Turbines (DDOWT).

A Notice of Application for Judicial Review was filed by the Dutton Dunwich group in the Divisional Court in Toronto on Tuesday against the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. It alleges the ministry has allowed that would limit the amount of noise any residence in the area should have to tolerate.

The ministry, in an email on Jan. 25, said it is reviewing the application for judicial review.

"We will be determining the appropriate next steps. As this is an ongoing legal matter, providing additional comment would be inappropriate," the ministry stated.

Members of DDOWT, along with members of Wallaceburg Area Wind Concerns (WAWC) chose the Wallaceburg home of Don and Diana Donkers - located near where some of the tallest turbines to be erected in Canada are to be built in the Otter Creek Wind project - to announce the legal challenge on Jan. 25.

The announcement was simultaneously made in the Ottawa area by the Concerned Citizens of North Stormont and Save the Nation.

Rowe told reporters: "The MOECC has admitted that their previous noise modelling guidelines resulted in underestimates of noise at the nearby homes."

But without any evidence that this was necessary, the ministry has allowed companies promoting at least five large-scale wind projects to ignore those new government regulations, she said.

Rowe said transition provisions were put in place by the ministry to allow those wind turbine companies to use the old regulations without having to provide evidence that they were unable to comply with the new noise modelling guidelines.

"Our judicial review application alleges that the MOECC erred in law by failing to obtain any evidence that the wind companies were unable to comply with the new guidelines," she said.

Noting this step has never been tried before, she said, "the purpose is to put a stay on the use of the transition rules as of now, until this whole issue is heard in the courts.

"That means the projects cannot move forward with their renewable energy applications until such time as a decision is made about whether the government did err on these issues," she added.

Dan Donkers, who describes the 642-foot wind turbines slated for the Otter Creek project as "monsters," is troubled by the ministry's decision to not require these projects to adhere to new noise standards.

"One of my observations (while working) in industry, the province has stated above and beyond all things, it's safety first," Donkers said.

Noting he can't step on a ladder in some workplaces without having to follow certain protocols, Donkers said when it comes to these **wind** projects, "safety seems to be a third concern and that just seems foreign to me."

Violet Towell, spokesperson for WAWC, said based on information received regarding the Otter Creek project, 11 of the 12 **wind** turbines and the transformer station would be out of compliance if the new **rules** are used.

She said when members of WAWC met with members of Boralex, the developer of the Otter Creek project, "they indicated they did not have the noise output data required for the technical **review** at this stage of the game."

Towell said this issue and others were brought to the ministry's attention, but "to no avail," adding these concerns were documented by numerous submissions through the Environmental Registry process for the Otter Creek project.

The ministry commented Thursday regarding the guidelines: "The ministry's top priority is the protection of the environment and human health. We take our regulatory role very seriously," stated the email. "When it comes to **wind turbine** projects, the companies involved must meet our stringent noise standards through noise audits and the ministry's Compliance Protocol for **Wind Turbine** Noise. We work closely with the companies to ensure they are meeting the standards set out."

Dutton Dunwich Mayor Cameron McWilliam attended Thursday's announcement.

Citing the fact a community vote was held that resulted in 84 per cent of residents being opposed to the Strong Breeze **Wind Power** project planned for the community in Elgin County, McWilliam said meetings have been held with the developer and the ministry to talk about issues.

"We've had questions and no answers," he said.

McWilliams added it's unfortunate that citizen groups have been forced to seek a judicial **review** to get answers to just one part of the project, in this case, noise.

Wind developments in question

According to a Notice of **Application** for Judicial **Review**, the following five industrial **wind turbine** projects have opted to proceed under the transition provisions and not correct errors in their noise reports:

Easter Fields **Wind power** Project, located in eastern **Ontario** in the Municipality of the Nation and the Township of Champlain, United Counties of Prescott-Russell

Nation Rise **Wind** Farm, located in eastern **Ontario** in the Township of **North** Stormont, United Counties of **North** Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry

Otter Creek **Wind** Farm, located in southwestern **Ontario north** of Wallaceburg

Romney **Wind Energy Centre**, located in southwestern **Ontario** in the Town of Lakeshore

Strong Breeze **Wind Power** Project, located in southwestern **Ontario** in Municipality of Dutton Dunwich

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Electric vehicles pose a dilemma of conscience

Sault Ste. Marie This Week · Thu Feb 1 2018
Tone: Neutral
Byline: Joseph Quesnel
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Click image to download In the push to normalize **electric** vehicles, many forget it's not the end of the road as far as environmental impact is concerned.

Presumably, those using **electric** vehicles or **hybrids** are motivated by a desire to improve the environment, especially by reducing carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Many owners of these vehicles derive satisfaction and some could argue a sense of self-righteousness from using the vehicles.

However, it's also important to look at the full life cycle of that type of **transportation**, including how it's produced.

For example, owners of **electric** vehicles in Nova Scotia should be aware that **electricity** is generated in that province almost exclusively through fossil **fuels**, especially imported coal. Is using an **electric** vehicle the best way to reduce carbon emissions within that context? Buying the so-called environmentally efficient vehicle is only the first part in the equation. A full analysis of cost benefits and tradeoffs is necessary. But it seems the unfortunate reality is that many environmentally-motivated people are more interested in appearing virtuous or bragging about their new Prius or Tesla than doing their homework.

The sad truth is that not looking at the full life cycle seems almost endemic to environmental causes, including those related to social justice causes. Take the local food or locavore movement. They adhere to the 'food miles'notion that shipping food long distances increases greenhouse **gases** but ignore the **energy** used in production, just as in the case of **electric** vehicles.

However, it has been found that efficient inter-modal container shipping often allow companies to grow things in better conditions overseas and, in fact, shipping them over long distance emits fewer emissions than growing food domestically.

Many credible studies have found that the carbon emission difference is quite negligible. There are much better ways to improve the **carbon footprint** caused by global agriculture.

Similar case studies can be made of so-called **fair** trade coffee or chocolate. Many westerners think they're drinking pure justice when they down the latest certified **fair** trade coffee, when in fact they might be having a negative impact on economies in developing countries, including encouraging producers to switch to coffee when they should be focusing on crops their country is better at producing.

The Frontier **Centre** for **Public** Policy has always focused on smart green policies that lead to demonstrably positive environmental impacts and steer clear of virtuesignalling policies that make you a hit at cocktail parties but a bad environmentalist.

Virtue signalling refers to the very **public** expression of moral values done to enhance standing within a social group. It's chiefly done by middle-class individuals with liberal values on environmentalism.

Even environmentalists must face a dilemma in the production phase of **electric** vehicles. As technology improves, the demand for copper for these vehicles will also increase. The International Copper Association (ICA) says **electric** vehicles use a substantial amount of copper in their batteries and in the windings and copper rotors used in **electric** motors. A single car can have up to six kilometres of copper wiring.

We then need to consider the amount of **energy** -including **electricity** -used in the mining and production process. To accommodate this immense demand for copper, environmentalist groups need to reconsider their campaigns against open pit and strip mining, or face hypocrisy.

If the copper ore is only accessible by strip mining and you need an electrified **transportation** system to operate it, and that system uses trucks ranging in size from 180-to-400-tonne capacity on 12-hour shifts, are we really reducing our **energy** use and **carbon footprint**? Or are we just shifting this intense **energy** use to an unseen location? Although mining has improved its environmental footprint over the last few decades, some impacts are unavoidable

. For example, the proposed Pebble mine in southern Alaska is generating controversy because of its expected impact of local ecosystems (particularly on fish-bearing water bodies) and natural resources. Never mind the effects of waste rock and tailings ponds from inevitable abandoned mines.

In the end, individuals who want to help improve the environment by riding in **electric** or **hybridelectric** vehicles might want to reconsider the environmental tradeoffs.

Joseph Quesnel is a research fellow with Frontier **Centre** for **Public** Policy (www.fcpp.org). Copyright: Troy Media

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