

December 3, 2013

Ontario's Long-Term Energy Plan Brings Us Closer To A Sustainable Future

The release of Ontario's long-term energy plan on Monday signifies a step toward a clean and sustainable energy future for the Province. We applaud this progress while also recognizing that the way in which the initiatives outlined in the plan are implemented is as important as the initiatives themselves. As initiatives are rolled out, SWITCH will represent the interests of its members and encourage clear and simple rules, a stable investment environment, and making it easier for businesses and individuals to invest in and profit from sustainable energy and energy conservation investments.

Since 2002, SWITCH has advocated for a move towards renewable energy generation and conservation as the most economically and environmentally sound sources of energy supply. SWITCH Ontario participated in the Ministry of Energy's consultation process by [submitting comments](#) on the previous draft of the long-term energy plan through the Environmental Registry. SWITCH recommended that Ontario's energy future should include investment in:

- Conservation
- Renewables
- Gas combined heat and power (CHP)
- Increased transmission capacity

We were pleased to see that the final version of the long-term energy plan contained the following points that were in line with the interests of our members, our environment, and our economy:

Conservation

- Implementing conservation programs and standards to offset most growth in electricity demand over the next 20 years
- Expanding Demand Response programs to help achieve a 10 per cent reduction in peak demand by 2025
- Making new financing tools available to consumers starting in 2015, including programs to incent energy efficient retrofits to residential properties
- Giving consumers online access to their electricity data through the [Green Button Initiative](#)
- Working with [Ontario EcoSchools](#), an environmental education and certification program for grades K-12, to bring more resources about energy conservation into classrooms

Renewables

- Extending the phasing-in of wind, solar and bioenergy for three more years than estimated in the 2010 LTEP
- Developing a new competitive procurement process with the Ontario Power Authority for future renewable projects larger than 500 kilowatts
- Continuing to encourage First Nation and Métis participation in renewable energy projects
- Moving forward with the conversion of the Northern Ontario Generating Stations from coal to advanced biomass
- Increasing the province's hydroelectric portfolio to 9,300 megawatts by 2025

Gas Combined Heat and Power (CHP)

- Recognition of Combined Heat and Power as an effective way to use natural gas to generate electricity while providing useable heat and a commitment to focusing on efficiency and regional needs with future procurements

Increased Transmission Capacity

- Launching the Aboriginal Transmission Fund (ATF) which will help First Nation and Métis communities complete the due diligence required before becoming involved in new transmission line projects
- Commitment to the New East-West Tie to reduce transmission constraints
- Initiating planning for a new Northwest Bulk transmission line west of Thunder Bay to increase transmission capacity and provide a means for new customers and growing loads to be served with clean and renewable sources

SWITCH feels that the above points will lead to significant progress toward a sustainable energy future for Ontario. In order to accomplish the goals set out in the Long Term Energy Plan, SWITCH has recommended the following starting steps:

- The requirement of an energy assessment and rating for the sale of each property to allow buyers to make well-informed decisions about the operating costs and energy performance of a property before it is purchased
- Enhanced incentives for demand shifting, peak demand reductions, and consumption reductions
- Lifting the moratorium on offshore wind to allow for the expansion of this proven technology
- Providing incentives for solar hot water systems, both as retrofits and in new build, and requiring new buildings to be “solar ready” within the building code
- Providing a fixed price for power from CHPs to allow development of district energy systems

SWITCH feels that implementing the above suggestions would lead to a more rapid achievement of the balance that the long-term energy plan seeks to create in Ontario’s energy future. It would also be in line with the plan’s guiding principles of cost effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community engagement, and an emphasis on conservation and demand management before building new generation.

Once again, SWITCH applauds the Ministry of Energy’s commitment to clean energy and conservation. SWITCH’s members are ready and able to assist with the implementation of this progressive vision for our Province’s energy future.

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