

UPCOMING DATES

JULY

12 Georgina Council, 9:00 a.m.

Halton Regional Council,
9:30 a.m.

Richmond Hill Council,
10:00 p.m.

14 Hamilton Council, 9:30 a.m.

17 Brock Council, 10:00 a.m.

Milton Council, 7:00 p.m.

18 Caledon Planning &
Development Committee,
2:30 p.m.

Caledon Planning &
Development Committee
Public Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

25 East Gwillimbury Committee
of the Whole, 10:00 a.m.

East Gwillimbury Council,
2:00 p.m.

26 Caledon Council, 7:00 p.m.

27 East Gwillimbury Committee
of the Whole, 2:00 p.m.

East Gwillimbury Council,
6:00 p.m.

AUGUST

1 Caledon Planning &
Development Committee
Public Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

2 Georgina Council, 9:00 a.m.

Mississauga Council, 9:30 a.m.

7 Uxbridge Council, 10:00 a.m.

8 Caledon Planning &
Development Committee,
2:30 p.m.



MUNICIPAL CLIMATE ACTION PLANS SHOULD PLAY LARGER ROLE IN PROVINCIAL ENERGY PLANNING, SAYS REPORT

GETTING OFF THE GAS

Lana Hall

As the Province of Ontario continues to seek ways to increase electricity capacity while reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, a new report finds a fundamental contrast between the Province's supply-first approach and the approach of most municipal climate action plans, which focus on improving energy efficiency and reducing electricity demand at a local level. And according to the report, without more collaboration between municipalities and the province on energy planning, this difference in approach to 'getting off the gas' could lead to increased electricity prices and lost opportunities for job creation at the community level.

Co-authored by the Clean Air Partnership (CAP) and the Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG), the report "Assessment of IESO's Pathways to Decarbonization Study: From the Perspective of Municipal Climate Action Plans" was commissioned by the Clean Air Council, a

network of 40 Ontario municipalities created by CAP.

Released in June, the CAP / SSG report examines the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO)'s December 2022 "Pathways to Decarbonization" report to the Minister of Energy "to evaluate a moratorium on new natural gas generation in Ontario and to develop a pathway to zero emissions in the electricity sector", and notes significant differences between the municipal and provincial approaches to energy planning.

According to the CAP / SSG report, while the province prioritizes increasing electricity supply, municipalities are more likely to prioritize reducing electricity demand, typically through solutions that meet energy needs more locally. These solutions may include incentiv-

izing the retrofitting of energy inefficient buildings or implementing district energy systems, which centralize the heating and cooling of buildings within a neighbourhood or community (see "Getting to Net Zero: Deep Lake Water Cooling on the Rise," *Novae Res Urbis Toronto*, Friday, May 5, 2023).

The IESO report addresses a growing desire by businesses and communities to move away from fossil-fuel-based energy, and to embrace clean electricity systems instead. For example, in Ontario, sectors such as mining and agriculture are increasingly seeking to electrify their operations, while the demand for electric vehicles also continues to climb. But decarbonizing Ontario's electricity sector by 2050 would require a system more

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- Tonja Leach

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Annual subscription rate is \$429 +HST (ON).

Complimentary trial subscriptions are available.

Advertising rates available upon request.

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ISSN 1918-7548

GETTING OFF THE GAS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

than double the size it is today, as an estimated cost of \$400 billion, the IESO reports.

“We look out over the next 20 years and we look at economic growth, we look at population growth, we look at a variety of different factors and drivers ... and what we’re seeing over the next 20 years or so is significant growth in electricity demand,” says IESO spokesperson **Andrew Dow**. “...That means that we need to go out and procure more supply.”

Dow notes that the IESO puts some emphasis on improving energy efficiency as part of the solution to decarbonizing electricity production. However, according to Clean Air Partnership executive director **Gaby Kalapos**, this fundamental misalignment of energy planning approaches between municipal and provincial energy planning could lead to climbing electricity prices in Ontario, and missed opportunities for job creation and local economic development.

“I think one of the problems if we don’t address the misalignment, is that they’re mutually destructive to each other,” Kalapos told *NRU*. “Because if we focus only on the big transmission, big generation, that will likely increase electricity prices. That will

hurt decarbonization efforts, and that will undermine the electrification energy efficiency opportunities.”

The increased costs that CAP identifies do not apply only to projected increases in the costs of producing electricity itself, but also reflect the cost of missed opportunities, Kalapos notes.

“Because we all know that while you can meet [demand] with big generation and big transmission, it doesn’t come cheap,” she says.

“In addition, if we don’t capture the energy efficiency and distributed energy resources opportunities that are within our communities, we will have lost out on an energy, an economic and job creation opportunity that all our communities could benefit from.”

Those opportunities could come in the form of new jobs created by the retrofitting of older buildings, for example, which many Ontario municipalities are starting to encourage through incentives or through private-public partnerships.

More all-encompassing approaches to phasing out natural gas use as an energy source, says Kalapos, such as the province’s recent announcement of the planned expansion of the Bruce Nuclear Power Plant,

take energy efficiency improvement and local employment opportunities away from those communities.

“[Distributed energy] still has a hell of a lot more co-benefits than a new nuclear power plant in Bruce, in the existing community which already has all the benefits associated with the nuclear power plant, rather than investing in all of our Ontario communities.”

Local communities should play a role in broader conversations about energy use because it is municipal-level governments that make decisions about land use, which is a big determinant of energy use, according to **QUEST Canada** executive director, **Tonja Leach**.

“The thing that really sets the path for energy use and therefore emissions, is how we use land,” Leach told *NRU*.

“They’re the ones who do all the local zoning ... and it’s not just about siting for new supply. We know that how we do urban planning locks in our energy choices for the next 100 years. Once a road is there, a road will always be there. Once an industrial process is in a place, it will always be there. So there needs to be a ton of forethought put into just how we use land in a local context ... because it has repercussions on what our energy systems look like and how efficient they are.”

The CAP and SSG report concludes with a number of suggestions for how the IESO and municipalities could work together to manage electricity demand, many of which are

rooted in the development of ongoing conversations between the province and municipalities as they relate to local climate action plans.

“...Having conversations between municipalities and incorporating their municipal climate action plans into IESO energy planning is really critical,” says Kalapos.

“It’s not going to happen without a lot of engagement from municipalities and willingness from the IESO and the province to really bring municipalities into this conversation. I’ve heard from some municipalities that there are conversations starting out between their climate teams and the IESO to incorporate that, but it’s still early days and a lot more work to be done on that front.”

[To read the “Assessment of IESO’s Pathways to Decarbonization Study: From the Perspective of Municipal Climate Action Plans” report, please visit the Clean Air Partnership’s website here.](#) 🌱