

IESO Engagement

From: Don
Sent: June 16, 2021 2:36 PM
To: IESO Engagement
Subject: IESO Consultation on phasing out Ontario's gas-fired power plants

Chuck Farmer, Senior Director, Power System Planning

Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO)

Toronto, Ontario

Dear Sir:

Re: The IESO Consultation on phasing-out Ontario's gas-fired plants

Thank you to the IESO for undertaking this consultation. Phasing out the province's use of gas to generate electricity is a critical issue. We are in a very widely acknowledged climate emergency. It is also well understood and widely admitted that the main cause of the climate emergency is the combustion of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas. That has to stop as quickly as possible.

Beginning in 2005 and completing in 2014, the Ontario government eliminated the use of coal from power generation. Oil has not been part of the mix in the recent past. The fossil fuel that remains is "natural" gas which more accurately should be called fossil gas. Over half of that gas utilized in various ways in Ontario at this time is actually FRACKED fossil gas. Many jurisdictions have banned fracking for very good health, climate and environmental reasons. These include our large neighbour to the south, New York State.

The increasing use of fracked gas makes it much more imperative that we stop using gas to generate electricity in Ontario. In addition to the health, climate and other negative impacts of fracking, the subsequent burning of this fossil gas redoubles those impacts.

I live in Hamilton, and for many decades this city was known for its very poor air quality. Industry was often blamed, but then Ontario shut down the biggest coal-fired power plant on the continent – the OPG facility at Nanticoke. Since then Hamilton has seen smog warnings virtually disappear. We and the GTA and other parts of Ontario were/are downwind of that Nanticoke plant, and as soon as it was shut down, our air quality significantly improved. Burning more fossil gas will definitely reverse that improvement.

Ontario knows how to improve air quality. It must keep doing so. Any reversal is a direct conscious assault on the health of the people of this province. The IESO needs to honestly admit this and do everything in its power to eliminate the generation of Ontario's electricity with fossil fuels.

There is no shortage of evidence that Ontario CAN eliminate fossil fuels from our electricity supply. There is an abundance of low-cost hydro electricity available from Quebec. There are an abundance of opportunities to further reduce electricity demand through conservation efforts. And wind and solar are already cheaper than gas or nuclear in supplying electric energy. The rest of the world understands this even if the current provincial government in Ontario remains in ignorance or denial.

The climate crisis is so serious and already causing so much direct damage even here in Ontario, that any steps to make that worse really now fall into the territory of criminal acts. Do not be naive about what will happen if gas use is not rapidly phased-out of Ontario electricity supply. If the Ontario government and the IESO do not shut this down, the people of Ontario will.

Over the last decade public pressure has stopped the expansion or construction of numerous fossil fuel infrastructure projects. I might point you to what happened to Keystone XL, Northern Gateway and Energy East pipelines. I might direct you to the dozens of fossil-fuel electricity generation facilities stopped in the US, or forced to close, or to accelerate their phase out.

This movement is not going to be reversed. The people ensuring this are fighting for their lives and the lives of their children and grandchildren. They are not going to permit ANY expansion of fossil fuel use in Ontario, whether the IESO or the province or anyone else has other plans!

My city has declared a climate emergency. It is also one of nearly 30 in the province which have passed a resolution calling for the complete phase out of gas-fired electricity generation in Ontario by no later than the end of this decade. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Why have Hamilton City Council and so many others taken this position? For some of the reasons above, certainly, but beyond that for the simple certainty that they cannot achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions if the electricity system remains or even becomes increasingly contaminated with fossil fuels. What's the point of acquiring, as Hamilton is, or encouraging, as Hamilton is, the replacement of fossil vehicles with electric ones if that just transfers emissions from one location in the province to another? What is the gain in encouraging replacement of gas furnaces and water heaters with heat pumps driven by electricity if that electricity isn't fossil free?

Vancouver has banned the installation of gas connections to new homes after the end of this year. This has already been legislated in some other cities in North America, and it certainly will be done elsewhere to address the climate crisis. The demand for that is already well understood and widely supported. People are going to ensure that happens and make certain that the electricity supply is fossil free.

The IESO study needs to reflect several things:

1. We are in a climate emergency. It is worsening dramatically and rapidly. What isn't understood today, will be recognized tomorrow and acted upon. As reported repeatedly in publications such as the *Globe and Mail*, the fossil fuel era is in terminal decline. The quicker Ontario acts to cut fossil fuel use, the greater the economic, social and environmental benefits.
2. Fossil fuel use is KILLING thousands of people every year through climate and health impacts. It is IMMORAL for anyone to increase the use of fossil fuels, and we are not far from the point where those who intentionally do so will be found criminally responsible. This is not a threat; it is a widely recognized future likelihood.

3. Any attempt by Ontario to increase the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity will be met with fierce public resistance. We will NOT permit such unacceptable behaviour. And we will not forgive any administrative body that advocates for such a path. The IESO needs to understand that this will be the outcome of any such attempt. Again, it is not a threat. It is simply the social and political reality already very visible and obvious in Ontario.

4. You have a very easy task: There are multiple alternatives to the continued use of fossil fuels to generate electricity in Ontario and a very clear path to eliminating fossil gas from the electricity supply. This will not even be a matter of economic sacrifice; it will be a major economic boost. Please join the effort to address climate change, air pollution and justice.

Sincerely,

Don McLean



Member of the Hamilton Gallery of Distinction