



Council seeks to improve understanding of energy issues

Kitchener, Ontario: Concerned about a range of energy policy issues, a non-partisan agency has resolved to do what it can to improve the quality of public discussion and debate. The Council for Clean and Reliable Electricity (CCRE) has made an impact over the last three years by organizing expert meetings and a series of conferences on Ontario electricity issues that feature high-profile commentators who aren't shy about posing tough choices and questioning established orthodoxies.

Glen Wright, the businessman and former Hydro One Chair who heads the Council, says the group came together out of a shared recognition that decisions on key issues will be most effective if there are systems at work to promote a broad understanding about crucial features of the energy system. Too often it seems that short-term trends tend to occupy the public discussion, and decision makers find themselves pushed to respond before all the concerned parties have a chance to fully understand the issues. The Council is neutral and is not trying to promote a particular point of view. Its primary objectives are to be factual and well-informed, and to encourage active engagement in important energy issues.

Frequently working with partners in academia and business, recent CCRE conferences have brought together leading experts and thinkers on the following topics: "Distributed Generation and The Future of Ontario's Electricity Grid," "Biomass and Energy for the Great Lakes Economy," and "The Future of Coal in Ontario." See our related story "A host of issues to address in getting the system ready for DG" from IPPSO FACTO December 2008 for a summary and discussion of Jan Carr's presentation to the distributed generation conference.

The Council's latest conference promises to be particularly challenging. Titled "Nuclear Power in Society: Finding the Balance," the event is aimed at fostering a constructive dialogue on the role that nuclear may play in a national and global strategy. Set for October 25 and 26 in Ottawa, the event asks participants to consider the following: "What role will nuclear play? Will it be a pivotal role in reshaping the national and global energy system? Or, will its own limitations reduce the role to a marginal contribution in the supply mix and final share of energy consumption?" The conference will be co-chaired by Jan Carr, the former chair of the Ontario Power Authority, and Jatin Nathwani, of the University of Waterloo. It will examine in depth three major themes relevant to nuclear policy — cost, safety and waste management — and focus on future directions for Canada. Geopolitical aspects of nuclear development, novel uses, international trade and impacts on the Canadian economy, employment and investment will also be explored through a panel discussion of energy thought leaders in business, industry and government.

The Council describes itself as a "non-partisan, not-for-profit, independent organization comprised of representatives from academia, public and private sectors, energy and strategic planning professionals that promote public dialogue related to the generation, transmission and distribution of clean, affordable and reliable electricity." It goes on to say that the Council "has played a central role in coordinating neutral debate and broad range discussion on electricity issues at facilitated conferences." Formally, its mandate includes:

- To promote the generation, transmission and distribution of clean, affordable and reliable electricity.
- To promote the understanding of the full range of available solutions and encourage a thorough review of the best available technologies on generation and emissions control.
- To encourage appropriate government action regarding the generation, transmission and distribution of clean, affordable and reliable electricity that will sustain the long-term economic and environmental needs.
- To encourage and promote ongoing independent research into policies and technologies to promote clean, affordable and reliable electricity.

Other Council members include Linda Angove, a member of the Premier's Project Team to investigate the 2003 Power Blackout in Ontario; Frank Carnevale, Chairman & CEO, Bridgepoint Group Ltd.; Jan Carr, former CEO of the Ontario Power Authority; Sean Conway, Director of the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen's University and Former Minister of Education for Ontario; Michael Dearden, Special Advisor to the President of the Ontario Realty Corporation; David Lever, a power industry expert with McCarthy Tetrault; Peter Milley, Former Senior Advisor Forest Sector Policy, Ontario Industrial Restructuring Commission; Jatin Nathwani, Executive Director, Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy; Ron Stewart, Founding President and CEO, Hydro Ottawa and Former General Manager, Customer Solutions, Ontario Hydro; George Todd, Chair, Utilities & Senior Advisor, Bridgepoint Group Ltd.; Roy Mould, President and CEO, Merides Business Solutions, Guy Holburn, University of Western Ontario; and Laura Rees, Executive Director of the Council.

The Council doesn't lobby and is encouraging students to consider starting careers in the energy sector. Clearly they are looking for something that has broad benefits: to increase the quality and frequency of public debate on energy issues.

"We are a group of engaged people who would really like the system to work," Wright says. "The more open and active discussion there is, the better off the system is going to be."

For more information see www.thinkingpower.ca.