

CITY OF THOROLD MAYOR & COUNCIL: CALL TO REJECT THE PROPOSED NEW GAS GENERATION

As a resident of Thorold and an engineer in the energy sector for seventeen years, I am writing to urge council to NOT provide municipal support to any new natural gas turbines for the production of electricity and to encourage proponents to bring forward solutions that offer greater value to ratepayers and reduce, rather than extend, our reliance on fossil fuels.

Northland Power showcases their wind, solar and battery storage projects prominently on their website. They take pride in their contributions to the energy transition and we can commend them and support the work of this company without accepting this new peaking plant. Now is not the time to be handcuffing ourselves to long-term contracts for fossil fuels both because the emissions undercut efforts to address climate change and because renewable energy offers greater value at a lower cost while avoiding the clear financial liability of costly infrastructure that must be phased out before its useful life is reached.

I have developed hydro, wind, and solar projects in the Niagara Region and throughout Ontario since 2006. From 2015-2017 I returned to school to learn from experienced renewable energy markets in Europe by obtaining a masters degree in sustainable energy technology from Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. With wind and solar now the lowest cost energy producers, the bottleneck delaying adoption of sustainable energy comes from entrenched ideas, legacy infrastructure and incompatible market structures, not cost or limits of the technology. Progress in Ontario has only been through ministerial directives as the system operator (IESO) is very slow to adapt to new technology or solutions and generally sticks with what has worked in the past and has traditionally been a good way to ensure reliability. There are foundational changes taking place in energy markets around the world and as a result, staying the course and relying on old solutions is exposing us all to more cost and risk rather than ensuring reliability. With the current provincial government highly confused in their understanding of renewable energy, leadership is lacking. This new round of gas procurement is the product of outdated ways of thinking that is neither our only or best option for meeting our energy needs.

In my previous correspondence, I commended you on your bylaw that stopped the distribution of unsolicited newspapers throughout Thorold; I also provided enthusiastic support for CHAR technologies setting up and expanding their biomass facilities at the multi-modal hub and provided background information in the early stages of a StormFisher power to gas, hydrogen proposal to contribute to the discussion. I bring this up because I have supported projects that are compatible with sustainability and tried to help others who have concerns better understand the technology. This is the first project I am compelled to oppose as it directly undermines our progress toward sustainability. I am just one of many people in Ontario who have devoted their career to moving this industry away from fossil fuels and building the sustainable energy supply that helped Ontario shut down coal in 2014 and significantly reduce reliance on gas in the years that followed. This new round of unnecessary gas procurement undermines the work we all have done and if it proceeds, makes it very difficult to believe that we in Ontario are working together to address these critical issues.

Council is familiar with climate change and the global effort to rapidly move away from fossil fuels and this is a proposal to build new fossil fuel infrastructure. Focusing on how it will rarely run and presenting its high cost as a benefit is an insult to all of us as the ratepayers who would be funding this project. If it does not run it is a waste of money and if it does run it creates harmful emissions. In both cases we lose. What is more important is that it will further lock us into reliance on these fuels, making it far more costly and difficult to replace. To assist with evaluating the arguments for and against this project I have attached several pages of additional discussion that you may find helpful. My hope is that council will stand with those of us who have been struggling for decades to move this industry forward and send the message to the proponent and the IESO that the people of Thorold deserve better than these outdated solutions.

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