



Template Letter to the Editor – Expansion Communities

Letter to the Editor: Provincial leaked Climate Change Action Plans
Puts Natural Gas Access at Risk

I am deeply concerned with the provincial Liberal plan to remove affordable natural gas from the energy mix. The provincial government, in its draft Climate Change Action Plan, is considering a policy that would see local homes and businesses replace the most affordable energy option we have – natural gas with electricity. Electricity costs in Ontario are already high enough and they are scheduled to rise significantly more in the coming years. By contrast, natural gas prices are lower now than they were 10 years ago and we simply cannot afford to ignore that fact. Natural gas is a critical partner fuel in a lower-carbon future.

Our community has been working for many years to increase access to affordable natural gas. We have been working with Union Gas to make this a reality and up until recently we were hopeful that Union Gas would be successful in the OEB's generic hearings in seeking approval for their proposal to provide natural gas service to our community. It appears this proposal may be at risk as a result of the provincial government's draft plan to eliminate the use of natural gas by 2050. As evidence of this, the environmental group Environmental Defence has already issued a letter to the Ontario Energy Board asking to stop the hearings on expanding natural gas to new communities until there is further clarity on the future of natural gas in this province. Following this, the Canadian Propane Association has also made the same request. If the OEB grants this delay, it would mark the second significant delay in this process, meanwhile communities that are eager to get increased access to affordable, reliable natural gas are left waiting and paying unreasonably high energy bills. How can we expect Ontario natural gas companies to invest millions of dollars into new infrastructure that our provincial government has said they want to make obsolete?

Continually we hear about the challenging fiscal realities of increasing electricity costs in Ontario. The fact is residents are already choosing between their electricity bills and other basic necessities. Any additional delay in bringing affordable natural gas to more rural communities further delays their ability to enjoy energy savings of upwards of \$3,000/year by switching to natural gas. Our residents deserve access to affordable natural gas much like the other 80% of Ontarians who already enjoy access.

Communities value the reliability, affordability and sustainability of natural gas. It is a necessity for natural gas appliances, home heating, water heating, and other uses and we should not be put in a position where we are asked or forced to replace them with more expensive electricity driven options.

I encourage you to write to Premier Kathleen Wynne, her Ministers and our local MPP to urge them to reconsider this ill-advised policy and ensure the expansion of natural gas to our community becomes a reality.

Sincerely,

Neil G. Vincent, Reeve
Township of North Huron

P.O. Box 90, 274 Josephine Street, Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0
Phone: 519-357-3550 Fax: 519-357-1110



May 20, 2016

Attention:
Kathleen Wynne, Premier
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Premier,

As the Reeve of the Township of North Huron, I urge you and your government to reconsider any policy or strategy within the forthcoming "Climate Change Action Plan" that would force my residents and businesses to replace the most affordable energy option, natural gas, with more expensive options. Natural gas is a critical partner fuel in a lower-carbon future.

Residents in my community have been working with Union Gas for many years to get access to natural gas. Up until recently we were hopeful that Union Gas would be successful in the OEB's generic hearings in seeking approval for their proposal to provide natural gas service to our community but it appears this proposal may be at risk as a result of your action plan. As evidence of this environmental group Environmental Defence and the Canadian Propane Association have already issued a letter to the Ontario Energy Board asking to stop the hearings on expanding natural gas to new communities until there is further clarity on the future of natural gas in this province. A further delay in this process means a further delay in my residents having access to this new clean and affordable energy option. How can we expect natural gas utilities to invest millions of dollars of scarce capital into new infrastructure when it is reported that your government will eliminate the fuel source by 2050?

Continually we hear from constituents about the challenging fiscal realities of increasing electricity costs in Ontario. The fact is residents in my community are already choosing between their electricity bills and other basic necessities. Any extra delay in bringing affordable natural gas to my community further delays their ability to see energy savings of upwards of \$3,000/year from switching to natural gas. My residents deserve access to affordable natural gas much like the other 80% of Ontarian's who already enjoy access.

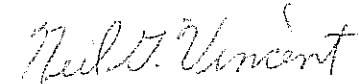
To make things worse, the cost of electricity, as you know is scheduled to rise significantly more in the coming years. By contrast, natural gas prices are lower now than they were 10 years ago and we simply cannot afford to ignore that fact. Natural gas service in my community will provide a reliable, affordable and sustainable source of energy for local homes, businesses and industries to help offset the rising costs of electricity. Preventing access as a result of your Climate Change Action Plan will have devastating consequences not only on household budgets but also on local business and industries that depend on the affordable source of energy to compete.

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In conclusion, I encourage you to abandon the flawed policy of removing natural gas from the provincial energy mix by 2050 and reassure the OEB that natural gas expansion remains a priority of the provincial government. Simply put, we cannot afford any further delays in this process.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neil G. Vincent".

Neil G. Vincent, Reeve
Township of North Huron

Cc: Glenn Murray, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
Lisa Thompson, MPP Huron-Bruce