

Energy changes biggest in 100 years

BY RAY MARTIN
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Officials at Cambridge North Dumfries Hydro believe they are the threshold of a whole new world.

At the utility's annual general meeting Thursday

company officials outlined the immediate and long range opportunities and challenges they are facing as the industry rapidly evolves.

Cambridge and North Dumfries Hydro president John Grotheer told the annual meeting that since

2000, provincial utilities have taken on added responsibilities and more are on the way.

"In 2000, we were responsible for wires only. In 2004, we were tasked with wires plus conservation programs, and in 2009 we'll face the major impact of the

Green Energy Act."

Grotheer said the changes taking place today are the biggest to hit the industry in the last 100 years.

"There are a lot of new ideas and a lot of new challenges," he said.

While the local utility now offers power distribution and conservation programs it will soon be challenged with the implementation of a new billing system, the introduction of smart meters, the move to operating a smart grid and meeting its obligations under the new Green Energy Act.

All these changes will help facilitate the introduction of two-way power flow through what power officials are calling the "Smart Grid." With the Smart Grid, people will not only be able to receive electricity from the local utility, but a property owner could install a wind turbine or rooftop solar panels and sell the power they produce back to

the grid.

Power officials believe that over the next few years as many as 100,000 Ontario homes, including 1,000 homes here in Cambridge, could install rooftop solar panels and be selling power back to the local utility.

Grotheer told the meeting that homeowners could pay as much as \$30,000 upfront to have rooftop solar panels installed on their roofs, but the system could pay for itself within 11 years.

Guest speaker Paul Grod, president of Rodan Energy Inc., told the meeting provincial utilities will also be partnering with the private sector to create auxiliary power plants to augment the power supply during periods of peak demand.

Grod said the province now has a plan in place to replace coal-generated power by 2014, by increasing nuclear and green power generation and reducing demand through innovative conservation programs.



Grod

One of those conservation programs would pay key industrial customers to reduce the power consumption by five per cent for periods of up to four hours.

Grod explained that in 2003, when the province first announced its intention to eliminate coal-fired power generation, coal-fired power plants generated 26 per cent of Ontario's power.

Nuclear plants generated 33 per cent, 27 per cent came for renewable resources and 14 per cent was generated from natural gas' creating a total of 28.8 mega watts of power.

By 2025, coal generated power will be gone and it is anticipated the make up of Ontario's power generation system could be 34 per cent from renewable sources, 31 per cent from nuclear, 21 per cent from natural gas for a total of 39.1 mega watts of power.

The next step in bringing the new Smart Grid to fruition could come within the next 60 days as the province will set the rates it will pay people for generating power from rooftop solar panels.