

April 15, 2012

Folks, My experiment with renewable energy is finished. Let me explain. Some ten years ago we bought a country property for retirement living. This 50 acre farm did not have any hydro wires. Given my background as a nuclear engineer and having an open mind about wind and solar energy, this was a perfect opportunity to do a real life experiment with wind turbines and solar panels initially on a weekend retreat and more recently as we tried living off-grid.

Over the course of ten years we spent approximately \$25,000 on a small wind turbine, solar panels, batteries, inverter, power cables and wiring, and back-up generators. This cost would have been much higher if it wasn't for my DIY ability to 'engineer' this system and not have to pay somebody to install it.

Once we got a house built, we depended on the sun and wind for the well pump, furnace, water heater, lights, microwave oven, coffee maker, toaster, fridge, freezer, TV, VCR, computers. This \$30,000 system was small and could only run two appliances at a time. My wife and I became skilled in demand management.

The turning point came at the end of summer 2011 with increased running of the generator to compensate for with shorter days and longer nights, simultaneous with decreasing performance of the battery.

I figured an additional \$30,000 had to be spent on new batteries, and make everything else larger: larger inverter, a larger wind turbine and more solar panels. I visualized the endpoint of being broke surrounded by a pile of electronics much like we read about now, eg. Solyndra, and other companies.

I made two phone calls, one to Hydro One, and another call to an electrical contractor. Two weeks later in October 2011, the solar and wind was disconnected and we connected to the giant griddle that was once part of my job to keep the lights on as a nuclear engineer. As long as the province does not go hog-wild with renewable energy, we can enjoy a modest amount of power for approximately \$100 each month. No longer do I need to head out on cold mornings to start the back-up generator in order to make coffee, and wonder if the back-up will even start.

I learned much about renewable energy. How many individuals or corporations have spent their own money to install renewable energy on their own dime? Everybody says renewable energy is good as long as somebody else pays.

While the wind and the sun might be renewable, the machines and electronics are as industrial as any chemical or nuclear plant using special minerals mined from the earth in order to harvest meagre and sporadic bits of energy in northern latitudes and no hope of storing energy overnight.

My experience bodes ill if extrapolated across Ontario. It is time for McGuinty and Co to pull the plug on their experiment and implement the moratorium.

I have more to say.

This is a tragedy of the commons when large tracts of land need to be forever spoiled with turbine towers and underground cables built with huge profits for the developers

Renewable energy may have its place in remote northern communities that currently rely on Diesel fuel being flown in for their generators. The problem is often too much too quick and mistakes are made by eg. the armchair zealots who have never ever connected wires to anything but their iPod, who have never chopped a cord of wood, and who couldn't run a pedal generator to make a cup of coffee. Those folks should not be in government, and should not be advising members of parliament let alone dictating energy policy.

I hope McGuinty realizes his experiment is over too, and put a moratorium in place and do a sanity check on renewable energy. Why are we shutting down, not just coal, but nuclear and hydraulic, and paying premium prices for wind and solar.

Yours truly, Eric as

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