

The corruption of power

By Skid Crease

'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' John Dalberg-Acton (1834-1902)

Lord Acton's full quote went on to say: 'Great men are almost always bad men.'

In reality, they don't have to be either great or bad to be corrupted by power. We don't consider any of our current politicians to be great. We don't have, for example, a provincial leader like the late and truly great Peter Lougheed. We have no national leader on the global stage with the courage of Mbande Nzinga, the very late and truly great Queen of Angola.

Instead, we have bureaucrats, mandarins and politicians incapable of 'seven generations' thinking. It was glaringly apparent when the common sense Conservatives sold the 407 ETR to a foreign conglomerate. Now, the current ruling party is trying to sell off Ontario's publically owned power generation to private enterprise. As financially incompetent as our public utilities are sometimes, the thought of our plutonium privatized in the hands of Bruce Nuclear makes me very nervous.

Recently at Queen's Park, we have seen very angry people protesting over the high electricity prices, very angry about the big bite that these rising energy costs are taking out of their flat-line paychecks. If people are getting that angry, then we all need to take a step back, take a big breath, and look for solutions. After one month of global research, Eureka! That big idea LED light bulb over my head came on in full energy-saving brilliance.

The Grattan Institute study in Australia has come up with 'Fair Electricity Pricing' using a 'capacity tariff' combined with 'time of use' smart metering. Based on their research and doing some calculations that appreciate the Ontario situation, here's what could be a workable solution:

Every household/business gets a basic survival supply of electricity at the lowest kwh cost. It would cover lighting, heating, utilities and tech needs.

It would be based on the number of people in, and the dimensions of, the household/business, balanced to your work day, and whether or not you are a senior. It would also calculate costs based on the season in which the metering is occurring. However, if more than the 'basic needs' quantity of electricity is used, then a premium would be paid, increasing in cost with the amount of electricity used.

So, if you are a conservation of energy type of person, your bill is going to be low. If you are an electricity hog, then you are going to pay up big time, household or business, as you should. The incentive here is simple, use energy wisely or go bankrupt. The planet is telling us more clearly day by day: Pay me now or pay me later.

The beauty of this system is that the bright tech boys in the back room can program the Smart Meters (that have not been used wisely yet) to do all this.

Scrap the current 'time of day' usage that only benefits the few 9-to-5 regular workers and businesses. Scrap the idea that corporations are 'persons.' All wealthy corporations should pay the premium cost for everything they use. Starting with the banks. Scrap total privatization of any public utility. We need to learn from our history and apply that knowledge. The shareholders in this power struggle are the people of Ontario, not the one per cent who keep getting richer.

Now, beyond the electricity pricing concerns, what is in our hands if the government does nothing? Do all those simple things to your home that energy educators have been telling us for years. Insulate, identify and plug the 'heat hole' leaks, supper insulate your attic, provide fresh air circulation, switch to LED lighting, and if you don't need it, unplug it! On a bigger scale, get a solar water heater back up. Then, hook it to a closed loop on-demand hot water system. Hang your clothes outside in the summer and over the hot air vents in the winter.

Install radiant glycol tube heating in the floors (easier if built into new homes), put in a Tesla Powerwall 2 that will give you three days of back-up solar electricity (for a conservation based home) in these days of fire and ice. Go for the FIT program when you install your solar panels/shingles/paint/micro hydro generators in your home/business. As another back-up for heat, the wood/biomass burning stove has evolved into a very efficient model of old tech heat radiating model that looks like a pizza oven. Eat, pray, conserve.

This is the 21st century, and the days of warming our caves with chunks of coal, fracked gas and globs of bitumen is neither feasible nor intelligent with 7.5 billion of us heating and lighting our global village.

Instead of building more fossil fuel pipelines, we should be retrofitting our existing ones to meet the most stringent international safety standards. And we should be investing in research, development and application of every solar, water, wind, tidal, geothermal and as yet unimagined renewable energy source available. We should have building codes that insist on LEEDS Gold/R2000 criteria as a minimum building standard for very new residence, school, business, and municipal office to federal edifice.

Those solutions will lead us back to the vision we once had of becoming a conserver society. If not us, who? If not now, when? I choose us, now.