

Nuclear makes a comeback

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Early in December, the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) will submit a report to the provincial government that will, in effect, lay the groundwork for the future of our power grid.

While there are many competing interests with an eye on the outcome, one that has a major impact on the quality of life here in the Upper Ottawa Valley is taking a proactive approach to getting its message across.

Recently, Observer editors met with staff from Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. (AECL) and Chalk River Laboratories (CRL) to hear their take on the province's power prospects.

At the current time, nuclear plants contribute about half the province's power supply. As we have seen in the past few years, our electricity supply is inadequate, which means the provincial government has to set direction now for the future stability of our growing power needs. Naturally, as the provider of half the province's power supply already, AECL sees itself in a strong position to be counted upon for increasing its capacity.

And that, should it come to pass, means renewed growth and prosperity for AECL facilities across the province, including our local facility at Chalk River.

At the present time, the Chalk River labs employ almost 2,000 employees and generates an economic impact of more than \$216 million into the local economy. If the future looks promising for CRL, it's obvious it will also benefit the entire Upper Ottawa Valley.

Already we have seen signs of a renewal of nuclear reliance in Canada's most industrialized province. The refurbishment of two of the reactors at the Bruce facility is just the first step in what appears to be a good sign for the nuclear industry, and indeed for all Ontarians who demand a safe, reliable source of electricity in this technological era. The fact the province's hydro, coal and gas resources are much more limited (not to mention contribute to our greenhouse-gas emissions, which nuclear industry does not) seems to point to an imminent resurgence in nuclear power as the key to unlocking Ontario's future electricity needs.

Of course, this is all dependent on the recommendation by the OPA, which should land on Premier Dalton McGuinty's desk on or about December 1. He won't have long to decide what to do with it, because our power grid cannot keep up with increasing demands. Will nuclear be a part of the solution?

We're betting on it.