



New York state energy policy: Cart before the horse? - by John Rynne

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John Rynne

I've always been fascinated with energy sources that were non fossil fuels. I grew up less than 14 miles from the hydro electric power plants in and near Niagara Falls. When I was young boy I thought that there must be a way to harness the sun's energy. I wasn't alone and so some individuals much wiser than me developed solar technology which has grown exponentially during the last decade along with wind energy. About 18 years ago, I completed an appraisal of a wind farm in Upstate New York which had some lucrative leases and was fascinated by the size of the structures. In my travels since that time, I'm amazed at the large numbers of wind turbines in many Upstate areas such as Wyoming County, Steuben County, Herkimer County, and the Tug Hill plateau south of Watertown, etc. To me it's a sign of technological progress. However, the energy policy of reducing the use and phasing out fossil fuels is putting "the cart before the horse". Even world renown Swedish environmentalist, Bjorn Lomborg, stated that there were \$50 billion of subsidies to renewable energy which is excessive.

In New York State there is a premature plan to phase out fossil fuels substantially over the next 12 years. As an example, not only oil and coal but also natural gas which is one of the cleanest energy sources is a target. Much of the real estate in Upstate New York is serviced by natural gas heat, cooking, hot water, and backup generation for electric along with many manufacturing processes. Conversions to all electric will be very expensive. The infrastructure supply side will likely be insufficient to handle the massive amount of properties that are forecasted to be all electric. Over the past decade in New York a number of coal and nuclear powered electric producing facilities have been decommissioned. In order to make up for the lost supply of energy, New York ironically is buying energy in some cases from coal fired facilities in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In a February 1, 2023 Buffalo News article by reporter David Robinson, the president & CEO of National Fuel which services the Buffalo area called New York State's plan to rapidly move away from fossil fuels and rely substantially on renewable energy "incredibly irresponsible".

The New York State plan recommends in 2025 that newly built single family homes be prohibited from installing equipment powered by fossil fuels. This would apply to furnaces, hot water heaters, stoves, etc. The plan recommends that starting in 2030 homeowners who need to replace existing heating systems and appliances be required to electrify. Currently approximately 90% of the homes in the Buffalo Niagara Region use natural gas. The president of the New York State Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors Association states the overall energy bill will increase by 50% in a fully electrified house or small office building. Furthermore, the average cost of conversion will be \$15,000-\$25,000. According to Gary Marchiori, president of Energymark LLC, the average home uses 10,000 kilowatts hours a year. If two electric vehicles are added to the household that will increase electric needs by 70%. Currently wind and solar produces about two gigawatts of power. The New York State plan would require more than four gigawatts of wind and solar to be installed each year for the next 18 years. According to the New York Independent System Operator which manages the state power grid, the electric supply would have to be tripled by 2040.

There are many experts that maintain reduction in fossil fuels is unnecessary because carbon dioxide is not a toxin but necessary to produce oxygen through green plant life photosynthesis. Also,

the green plant life is a major source of food and other products like lumber. According to Kevin Williams an Upstate meteorologist, carbon dioxide comprises only 400 parts per one million of our atmosphere. That's only four tenths of one percent or effectively zero. He cautioned that if carbon dioxide is reduced by 50% or 200 parts per one million that would put in harms way green plant life and subsequently human life. Many experts maintain the sun and the changes in the earth's magnetic fields are the major determinants of climate change.

In summary, there is only one good reason to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and that is there reportedly is only 300 years left of supply. In contrast, the sun and wind will have a life expectancy of untold billions of years which will supply energy for the long term. The rapid transition from fossil fuels could create an energy affordability/supply crisis and a reduction in real estate values. So New York State please don't "put the cart before the horse".

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