

## Ontario, Quebec to build power grid link

### New line to carry 1,250 megawatts

#### Will boost access to clean electricity

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[TYLER HAMILTON](#)

ENERGY REPORTER

Ontario and Quebec have agreed to spend \$800 million building a new transmission link capable of carrying 1,250 megawatts between the two provinces.

Energy Minister Dwight Duncan called the project a "first spike" in a national east-west electricity grid that could see Ontario become a bridge between Quebec and Manitoba.

"This link will allow us to significantly increase our access to clean, hydroelectric power from Quebec," Duncan said during a news conference with Pierre Corbeil, Quebec's minister of natural resources and wildlife.

Ontario can currently import up to 3,500 megawatts from the United States, mostly from high-emission coal-fired plants in Michigan and New York. The new link with Quebec will almost double the existing link to 2,650 megawatts, giving Ontario the flexibility to import more clean hydro power and less electricity based on coal.

Hydro Quebec has wanted to build such a link since the late 1990s but didn't have enough exportable surplus power to make it worthwhile. That changed this spring, when Quebec Premier Jean Charest committed \$25 billion toward new hydro power projects.

Yesterday's announcement marks a commitment from Ontario to invest \$124 million in two-way transmission infrastructure so it can accept the power from Quebec, which is spending \$684 million on its side of the border.

Construction by Hydro One will begin later this year and proceed in two phases. The first will see 900 megawatts of transmission capacity go into service by May 2009. The remaining 350 megawatts will be ready by 2010.

The interconnection with Quebec will be located near Cumberland, about 25 kilometres east of Ottawa, across the Ottawa River. On the Quebec side it will run through the Outaouais region.

Duncan said the link, on top of giving the province access to cleaner power during peak times, will also provide stability and reliability to both Ontario's and Quebec's grids.

"The blackout of 2003 and the ice storm of 1998 saw efforts to share electricity between the two provinces hampered by inadequate transmission," he said. "This project will prove vital if such circumstances beyond our control ever arise again."

Ontario is also exploring transmission projects that would tap hydro power from Manitoba and

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Labrador.

But building transmission is not easy. Queen's Park is under a tight deadline to build transmission to Bruce County by 2009, when two refurbished Bruce Power nuclear reactors are expected to return to service.

If the reactors are ready and the transmission isn't, the province faces a penalty of \$460 million a year per stranded reactor.

Duncan said the government plans to enhance the existing line to Bruce using devices that boost capacity and allow greater management of power flow. The interim measure would give Hydro One until 2012 to build a new line.

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