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Since 2005, the Prairie Policy Centre has devoted a great deal of attention to the study of sustainable energy. Speakers in our Energy Series brought us greater insight into many different energy options and opportunities available to Saskatchewan, and what public policies were needed to make things happen. The following is our energy vision for the province. It includes nuclear energy, and is the basis for a written submission we are sending to The Future of Uranium in Saskatchewan Public Consultation Process Chair, Dan Perrins.

An Energy Vision for Saskatchewan must include Nuclear

Energy is most often defined as the ability to work. It is the single most important component in our daily lives. It feeds us. It warms us. It moves us. It works for us. The world as we know it cannot survive without energy - and will need more, not less of it in the future.

And, Saskatchewan will have an amazing future if it can achieve its full energy potential. That includes the full nuclear cycle. Nuclear power has become an attractive component of the electricity supply mix in many parts of the world. Nuclear power generates very low carbon emissions. It has proven to be cost-competitive, has an abundant and secure long-term source of supply, and has made significant advancements in both reliability and safety. From a technical perspective, we see no reason not to include nuclear power in our energy mix.

Rising energy costs, limitations on non-renewal fuel supplies and growing environmental concerns are turning society's attention to alternative energy sources. With an energy resource base that includes uranium, conventional and non-conventional oil and natural gas, coal, bio-resources, hydrogen, geothermal, as well as ample wind, sun, and even potash (that will directly influence the biofuel industry), Saskatchewan has an unprecedented opportunity to become a world leader in the development of energy technologies and the supply of energy and energy fuels.

In order to take on that leadership role, the province must be prepared and able to venture into a new era of cleaner energy production and greater efficiencies. This means adopting policies that encourage innovation, investment and public support to invigorate the energy industry, rather than putting barriers in its way. It also means the province needs a stable energy policy framework that addresses four key fundamentals: security of supply, economic development, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility.

Security of Supply

Security means having an adequate supply of the knowledge, labour and capital needed to source, produce and deliver the energy we require, safely, and on a continuing basis. That, in turn, means adopting public policies that instill confidence in and interest for investing in all facets of the energy sector.

There is no question that Saskatchewan has ample supply of energy resources. What is questionable is our willingness and ability to access and develop the full potential of those supplies to the benefit of the province and society as a whole.

If Saskatchewan is to move forward, we must embrace a comprehensive new energy strategy. First and foremost, any plan must incorporate all known and potential energy sources, including nuclear. It must also include the building of functional distribution systems (pipelines, electrical grids, etc.) capable of sustaining energy development. And, it must allow for investment by both the public and private sectors in power generation and distribution. The taxpayer alone cannot carry the entire burden.

Other policy areas that will be crucial to success include:

- action on environmental regulation so energy providers know the rules and can make longer term investment decisions;
- continuing support for research that fosters innovation;
- training and education programs that compliment industry labour needs;
- flexible labour policy that protects workers while making it easy to adjust their efforts to changes in technology and the marketplace; and,
- immigration policy and procedures that facilitate matching skill-sets with labour shortages.

Economic Development:

Saskatchewan may not have been on the energy map twenty years ago, but it certainly is today. Higher prices for commodities such as oil, uranium, natural gas, along with political instability in many of the conventional energy producing regions, have caused the market to search for new opportunities that are both economically and strategically viable.

It is evident that Saskatchewan's political stability and position to markets, along with its vast resource base makes it ideally situated to take advantage of this growing demand for more secure energy supplies. Now the province needs a more attractive economic development climate that encourages investment in every aspect of the energy sector from exploration to delivery, and in every form of energy from wind to nuclear.

The most important thing government can do is open both energy generation and energy distribution to competition and give the Saskatchewan consumer the ability to choose where their energy comes from. This means the inclusion of private enterprise, both in sole ownership and in public/private partnerships. The private-sector is more likely to find value-added opportunities within the energy cluster that can invigorate further development and create numerous spin off possibilities.

The industry will also need incentives that encourage both investment and increased environmental stewardship. Regulatory harmonization will be needed to ensure new projects are moving ahead, rather than stalling due to various bottlenecks. Investors will look for a stable regulatory environment that facilitates longer term investment. And a steady supply of labour will be key to keeping the capital costs from skyrocketing due to slowdowns and wage inflation. By allowing economic development to flourish, investment in infrastructure, innovation, and people will occur.

Environment:

Whether or not you subscribe to the premise that the human race is responsible for climate change, we do need to take better care of the world we live in. That includes reducing our dependence on fossil fuels.

In response to the need for greater environmental stewardship and accountability, the world is in search of more technologically advanced, clean alternatives for energy production and

consumption that are economically feasible. As a major energy supplier, Saskatchewan must embrace all the latest technologies for extracting and producing clean energy, including nuclear.

Historically, government monopolies like SaskPower have not invested in innovation because it is expensive and government needed the money for other things. If we are to take full advantage of the opportunities green energy provides, Saskatchewan must be at the forefront of developing new green technologies and thus, must open the electrical market to competition. It is only by allowing private-sector companies capable of producing energy through cleaner means into the marketplace that we will be bringing new, commercially viable innovations and technologies to the province.

Social Factor:

Fundamental to all of this will be an acceptant society willing to listen, comment and understand what the energy future for Saskatchewan might entail. The energy industry has accepted its social responsibility and become more active in ensuring that government and business are transparent and accountable for producing energy via the most sustainable means possible.

We must remember that investment will flow to where it feels most wanted and it is the energy provider who ultimately decides if a source, a process, or a location is economically and socially viable. Without public support for industry advancement, opportunities will go elsewhere.

Conclusion

No other jurisdiction in Canada or even North America sits on the brink of such an opportunity, so there is no reason why our province should not be a major energy fuel producer and energy technology innovator within a generation. If the right policy decisions are taken today, this would be ample time to become a world leader in the nuclear energy lifecycle, to develop a clean fossil fuel industry, to incorporate wind, solar and other emerging technologies to our energy mix. Not to mention the potential to become a major exporter of value-added energy products, electricity and technology in addition to our traditional role as a supplier of raw commodities.

This is not blue-sky thinking. Saskatchewan can lead the world in clean energy. All we have to do is adopt an energy policy framework that opens the province to all the elements of sustainable energy development. And nuclear is a large part of that.

Given the proper social license required for modern energy development, Saskatchewan is well positioned to take a major leadership role in sustainable energy fuel production and innovation. This is our energy vision for the province.