

I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS & BAD NEWS: YOU CAN AFFORD A NEW CAR, OR YOU CAN AFFORD GAS FOR IT, BUT NOT BOTH.



2022 STAHLER. ANDREWS McMEEL SYNDICATION GOCOMICS.COM

Head the warnings

## This man is right on My comments about the Climate Act

In a recent column I encouraged readers to participate in the public comment process affecting New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (the Climate Act). That led some readers and social media followers to ask what I submitted to the state. My list of concerns and suggestions was six pages long, much too big of a tome to print here, so here is a Cliffs Notes version of my submitted report, looking at just three of the eight major topics I addressed.



BOB CONFER

### COMMENTARY

**Invest in reliable green energy.** One of the biggest goals of the Climate Act is zero-emissions electricity by 2040. The law emphasizes solar and wind. It doesn't mention, but it doesn't explicitly exclude either, investment in hydro-electric and nuclear energy. In my comments to the Climate Action Council I noted the importance of those two green energy sources.

The sun doesn't shine at night and wind, in most cases, decreases overnight, even coming to a veritable standstill. What's left to power factories and data centers, and keep homes energized for charging vehicles and heating, with electric transportation and heat both being goals of the Aact? Some will respond with "energy storage" but the technology and manufacturing thereof aren't even close — nor will they be in the next decade-plus — to store what's needed for maintaining a functioning society.

So, that leaves hydro and nuclear as the best options to

fill the gaps.

As I told the state, we shouldn't be in the business of adding new dams, flooding valleys and destroying lowlands and forests. But, we can maximize the assets we do have — increasing the output of existing dams and bringing idled ones back to life. More importantly, we should invest even more in the Niagara Power Project and increase its output.

And, then there's nuclear energy. We should site a few plants. There's a reason why visionaries like Elon Musk, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet see such energy as our future: Much power can be generated cleanly, efficiently, and...yes, safely.

**Invest in more electricians immediately.** As someone who is in the trenches of manufacturing, I can tell you that my fellow producers and the contractors that serve us are short on talent in the skilled trades. There aren't enough electricians.

That's just for the day-to-day tasks of running the economy

we have. The Climate Act will create its own economy, its own demand for such tradesmen to do any number of tasks including but not limited to: installing car charging stations at businesses; running 220-volt lines at homes for car charging; wiring solar farms; upgrading the grid; and changing homes and businesses to electric heat. There's an overwhelming amount of work to be done... and no one to do it.

My suggestion to the council was that NYSERDA and NYPA must take on major funding — and major marketing — of electrical trades programs at high schools, BOCES systems and trade schools.

It will have to be a dramatic expenditure. The vocational programs for high schoolers should be grown, the state and authorities providing funding for supplies and facilities. Adults who opt for electrical training should have some or all of their trade school tuition covered by the state. Apprenticeship programs at employers and in trade unions should see tax credits if not direct funding.

**Don't use too much farmland.** Addressing our energy needs with domestic and, more specifically, Empire State power will see plenty of now active farmland transformed into solar farms. We can't go overboard with that, though.

New York's agriculture is special and it's becoming more so as the western and central states battle either long-term or recurring droughts. We are

spared such abuse with plenty of water and enjoyable weather. New York is the place to be for farming. We have blessings that the rest of the world is losing.

That makes us a veritable breadbasket — we have to feed our fellow New Yorkers and it's getting to the point that we have to feed the world. Given those circumstances, I would hate for us to give up too much of those precious resources to solar.

My suggestion to the Climate Action Council was that solar's deployment must be controlled. The state, and individual counties, should take an inventory of existing arable land and create a standard that says "no more than X percent of this county's farmland can be repurposed to solar." The state and solar developers would then have to work around that and develop/assign projects only in places where the minimum ag inventory level hasn't been breached.

Previously I noted that the public comment period was set to close this Friday. Last week, our ability to provide input was extended to July 1.

If you would like to see the state's draft plan it is available online at [tinyurl.com/Scoping-PlanNYS](https://tinyurl.com/Scoping-PlanNYS). There is a means on their website to submit your comments electronically or you can mail them to: Draft Scoping Plan Comments, NYSERDA, 17 Columbia Circle, Albany, NY 12203.

Bob Confer of Gasport is the president of Confer Plastics Inc. Email him at [bobconfer@juno.com](mailto:bobconfer@juno.com).