

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (Reuters) - The Canadian province of Ontario plans to launch a centralized wind forecasting service next year, its bulk electricity manager said on Tuesday, as it tries to add more wind-generated energy to its grid.

Ontario, Canada's most populous province and biggest energy consumer, already leads the other provinces in installed wind energy capacity, with 1,200 megawatts of power. But it wants to increase this and is seeking other sources of clean energy as it phases out dirty coal-fired power stations.

"Ontario has been making great strides to install wind power ... increasing capacity this year by more than 50 percent," said Paul Murphy, president and chief executive of Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), the bulk energy manager.

"Due to the variable nature of wind generation, accurate wind forecasting is essential to the operation of an efficient and reliable power system," he said in a statement.

Centralized wind forecasting helps to improve forecast accuracy and consistency to make the power system more reliable. It also helps to reduce the administrative burden on wind generators, IESO said.

IESO has also introduced a web-based wind tracker that graphically displays hourly wind output from Ontario's large-scale wind farms.

There are currently eight large-scale wind farms operating in Ontario, according to the IESO's website, including the Amaranth wind farm northwest of Toronto, and the Wolfe Island wind power project near Kingston.

(Reporting by Nicole Mordant; editing by Peter Galloway)