

Evening Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - March 2, 2017

From: Electronic Media <cab.amedia@ontario.ca>
To: "@OPO-Media Relations and Issues Management" <opo-mediarelationsandissuesmgmt@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Bevan, Andrew (OPO)" <andrew.bevan@ontario.ca>, "McEachern, Gillian (OPO)" <gillian.mceachern@ontario.ca>, "Donelson, Philip (OPO)" <philip.donelson@ontario.ca>, "Bossin, Bryan (OPO)" <bryan.bossin@ontario.ca>, "Tomney, Genevieve (OPO)" <genevieve.tomney@ontario.ca>, "@CAB-Trans CO" <cab-transco@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Baker, Carys (ENERGY)" <carys.baker@ontario.ca>, "Berry, James (ENERGY)" <james.berry5@ontario.ca>, "Bodrug, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.bodrug@ontario.ca>, "Campbell, David (ENERGY)" <david.campbell2@ontario.ca>, "Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY)" <meaghan.coker@ontario.ca>, "Den Heijer, Kevin (ENERGY)" <kevin.denheijer@ontario.ca>, "DeWolfe, Julie (ENERGY)" <julie.dewolfe@ontario.ca>, "Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY)" <trevor.esdaile@ontario.ca>, "Festeryga, Katherine (ENERGY)" <katherine.festeryga@ontario.ca>, "Foster, David (ENERGY)" <david.foster@ontario.ca>, "Iqbal, Muhammad (ENERGY)" <muhammad.iqbal2@ontario.ca>, "McGrath, Jessica (ENERGY)" <jessica.mcgrath@ontario.ca>, "Moseley-Williams, Kate (ENERGY)" <kate.moseley-williams@ontario.ca>, "Nekolaichuk, Colin (ENERGY)" <colin.nekolaichuk@ontario.ca>, "Olsheski, Mark (ENERGY)" <mark.olsheski@ontario.ca>, "Ramasra, Raynier (ENERGY)" <raynier.ramasra@ontario.ca>, "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>, "Singh, Alysha (ENERGY)" <alysha.singh@ontario.ca>, "Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.teliszewsky@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Rachel (ENERGY)" <rachel.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Tresise, Landon (ENERGY)" <landon.tresise@ontario.ca>, "Tretiakov, Ilia (ENERGY)" <ilia.tretiakov@ontario.ca>, "Walman, Evan (ENERGY)" <evan.walman@ontario.ca>
Cc: "Sumi, Craig (CAB)" <craig.sumi@ontario.ca>, "Di Giovanni, Robert (CAB)" <robert.digiovanni@ontario.ca>, "Law, Sally (CAB)" <sally.law@ontario.ca>, "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>, "Nutter, George (ENERGY)" <george.nutter@ontario.ca>, "Halford, Gavin (ENERGY)" <gavin.halford@ontario.ca>, Electronic Media <cab.amedia@ontario.ca>
Date: Thu, 02 Mar 2017 22:30:35 -0500
Attachments: 20170302 - Media Scan - Hydro Rate Reduction (Evening).doc (336.38 kB)

Evening Media Scan: March 2, 2017

Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Click links below to view article:

Online Coverage

[Toronto Star: Hydro rate increases will be held to rate of inflation after 25-per-cent cut](#)

[Globe and Mail: Lower electricity rates? Don't fall for Premier Wynne's power move](#)

[Globe and Mail: Wynne's new plan promises hydro-rates relief for Ontario residents](#)

[Toronto Sun: Wynne shops for votes](#)

[CBC News: Premier tells Amherstburg horse trainer she played role in hydro cuts](#)

[CTV News: GTA residents wary of hydro bill cuts](#)

[CTV News: 'It's just a Band-Aid': Reaction to hydro cost reduction plan](#)

[TheBarrieExaminer.com: Liberals slashing hydro prices](#)

[BayToday.com: Ontario unveils plan to cut electricity rates by 17% on average this year](#)

[SooToday.com: PUC likes government's hydro rate cut plan](#)

[SouthwesternOntario.com: Walker: Fixing Kathleen Wynne's hydro mess will cost taxpayers \\$14 billion](#)

[MyKawartha.com: MPP Leal defends hydro distribution cuts of 25 per cent](#)

[InsideHalton.com: Burlington Hydro customers looking at \\$30 average savings on bills](#)

[CKWS Kingston: New cuts 'too little, too late' according to local hydro customers](#)

[AM900: Ontario to slash hydro bills by 25%, but ratepayers may face higher costs in the future](#)

[Orangeville Citizen: MPP Sylvia Jones condemns Liberals over cost of hydro](#)

TV Transcripts (6 PM)

[Global: Premier Wynne Announces Hydro Rate Reduction Plan And Draws Criticism](#)

[Global: Patrons At Wexford Diner React To New Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[Global: Ontario To Refinance Long-Term Electricity Contracts To Lower Hydro Rates](#)

[Global: Global News Reviews Ontario's Downplaying Of Hydro Prices Over The Months](#)

[Global: Global: Global News Examines How Hydro Rate Reduction Plan Impacts Future Generations](#)

[Global: Interview With Premier Wynne On Her Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[Global National: Province Announces Bit Cuts To Hydro Prices In Ontario](#)

[CFTO: The Provincial Government Unveiled Their Hydro Rate Reduction Plan Today](#)

[CFTO: Ontarians React To The Hydro Cuts Announcement](#)

[CFTO: CTV News Interviews A Resident Who Heard About Hydro Cuts From The Premier Herself](#)

[CFTO: Premier Kathleen Wynne Talks About The Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CityTV: Premier Wynne Announces 25 Per Cent Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CityTV: Opposition Says The Government's Hydro Plan Does Not Address Structural Issues](#)

[CityTV: Interview Highlights With Premier Wynne On Her Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CJOH: The Provincial Government Announces An Additional 17 Per Cent Cut On Hydro Bills](#)

[CJOH: CTV News Interviews Premier Kathleen Wynne About Hydro Cuts](#)

[CHCH: Premier Wynne Announces Additional 17% Cut to Hydro Bills](#)

[CHCH: NDP Leader Discusses Hydro Bills with Business Owners in London](#)

[CHCH: Comparison of Hydro Rates Across Major Canadian Cities](#)

[CHCH: Hydro Rate Cuts Expected to Benefit Ontario Businesses](#)

[CFPL: Province Announces Plan For 17 Percent Reduction In Hydro Bills](#)

[CFPL: London Residents and Businesses React To Hydro Announcement](#)

[CFPL: Interview with Premier Wynne On Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CBC: Premier Wynne Announces Additional Hydro Rate Cuts](#)

[CBC: Opposition Reaction to Hydro Bill Reduction Plan](#)

[CBC: Interview with Premier Wynne on Hydro Bill Reduction Plan](#)

[CBC: Consumer Reaction to Hydro Bill Cuts](#)

[CKCO: Premier Announces Big Cuts To Hydro Bills](#)

[CKCO: Interview with Premier Kathleen Wynne On Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[MCTV: Province Promises To Tackle Rising Electricity Prices](#)

[MCTV: Interview with Premier Wynne On Hydro Rate Relief Plan](#)

[MCTV: FONOM Statement On Hydro Rate Cuts](#)

[MCTV: Interview with Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault On Hydro Relief](#)

[CKVR: Provincial Government Unveils New Hydro Rate Reduction](#)

[CKVR: Interview with Premier Wynne on Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CKVR: Local Reaction Government's Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CKWS: Premier Wynne Announces Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CKWS: Kingston Area Residents React to Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

[CKPR: Premier Unveils Hydro Cost Reduction Plan](#)

[CKPR: Thunder Bay Hydro CEO Cautiously Optimistic About Province's Hydro Bill Reduction Plan](#)

[CBCNN: Power & Politics: Interview With Patrick Brown About New Hydro Cuts](#)

[CBCNN: Power & Politics: Interview With Minister Brad Duguid About New Hydro Cuts](#)

[Power Play: Panel Discussion On Premier Wynne's Hydro Rate Reduction Plan](#)

Online Coverage

Toronto Star: Hydro rate increases will be held to rate of inflation after 25-per-cent cut

By: Rob Ferguson, Queen's Park Bureau and Robert Benzie, Queen's Park Bureau Chief

Thu. March 2, 2017

<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2017/03/02/hydro-rate-increases-will-be-held-to-inflation-after-25-cut.html>

Hydro ratepayers will save 25 per cent on their bills starting this summer, but face an extra \$25 billion in interest charges over the next 30 years under the Liberal government's electricity relief plan.

The additional cost is the trade-off for easing prices now, said Premier Kathleen Wynne, who is struggling in the polls with an election just 15 months away.

Wynne compared her plan to a homeowner extending a mortgage term to get lower monthly payments.

"I don't expect a celebration as we make these announcements today. People are struggling with electricity costs that are too much for their families to bear," she told reporters Thursday.

"For too long, governments — my own included — have made mistakes in the way we've structured Ontario's electricity system."

Billions in new hydro system investments were being billed to ratepayers over 20 years, and the government has decided to amortize those costs over 30 years, at an annual cost to the treasury of \$1.83 billion.

Hydro bills will increase no more than the rate of inflation, about two per cent, over the next four years, and this spring's budget will be balanced as forecast, Wynne pledged.

The average residential hydro bill has jumped from \$91 a month in 2005 to \$156 last year.

Many consumers in rural and northern areas, who rely on electric baseboard heat, pay hundreds more.

Opposition parties said the plan amounts to short-term gain for long-term pain as the Liberals try to revive their political fortunes — and Ontarians will foot the bill.

“I want to see a drop in hydro rates. I think that everyone that pays a hydro bill wants to see a drop. But . . . the majority of people are going to be disappointed that this is just for show,” said Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

“This is a Band-Aid on a bullet wound.”

New Democrats questioned why the government is borrowing billions for the rate relief after Wynne insisted new subways and other infrastructure couldn't be built unless money was raised by privatizing Hydro One.

“It makes no sense,” said Deputy NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, whose party released a plan Monday promising rate relief of 17 per cent to 30 per cent, in part, by renegotiating hydro generating contracts and buying back Hydro One shares.

Brown, who is ahead of Wynne in public opinion polls, said his Conservatives will finally unveil their hydro platform within the next few weeks.

It could be a scramble for a party that, until Wednesday, was saying Ontarians would have to wait until after a November policy convention for details.

As first revealed by the Star, the 25-per-cent hydro rate cut includes an eight-per-cent rebate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax that took effect Jan. 1.

MPPs must pass legislation on the further rate relief, which will average 25 per cent for the typical homeowner, but could reach “40 to 50 per cent” in rural and northern areas with high delivery charges, said Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault.

Hydro One customers, including cottagers, will enjoy bills that average 31 per cent less, said Ferio Pugliese, the utility's executive vice-president of customer and corporate affairs.

Brown said it's too early to say whether his party would support the rate cut legislation, while Singh said the NDP will give it “thoughtful consideration.”

Not mentioning him by name, Wynne blamed her Liberal predecessor, former premier Dalton McGuinty, for making a “mistake” in the way energy investments were financed after 2005.

“We asked one generation, today’s generation, to unfairly shoulder the burden of nearly all of those costs. We had to play catch-up and we asked today’s ratepayers to cover nearly the whole tab,” the premier said.

The impact for customers will be noticed on the “global adjustment” line of hydro bills after legislation passes at Queen’s Park this spring

That’s the levy McGuinty added to bills in 2005 to bankroll \$50 billion in power contracts with public and private generators, who are paid more than the market price for the electricity they produce.

The global adjustment also covers the premiums paid to green energy generators, such as wind and solar companies that sell power to the electricity grid.

There will also be new measures to subsidize rates, including offsetting the cripplingly high delivery charges in rural areas. These steps will cost the government’s treasury, and taxpayers, \$2.5 billion more over the next three years, or about \$833 million annually.

These subsidies will no longer come out of hydro bills.

About 350,000 rural customers are now getting help, but that will rise to some 800,000 households in areas with the highest hydro costs.

As well, low-income families will benefit from a 50-per-cent increase in subsidies under the Ontario Electricity Support Program, raising monthly credits on the low end to \$45 and \$68 at the high end, for households with the largest families and electric heat or medical devices that must be plugged in.

First Nations households on reserves will have their delivery charges covered.

Ontarians in arrears on their hydro bills must still find a way to settle up through longer-term payment plans, Thibeault said. About 60,000 people had their hydro disconnected last year for non-payment, but the Legislature passed a bill last week banning winter disconnections.

Customers who are not now eligible for low-income conservation programs will be able to apply for help from a new “affordability fund” to help with improvements to ensure energy efficiency, he added.

A budget for that fund has not been set, but officials said it would be designed so that people can get assistance without having to put substantial amounts of their own money on the table to qualify.

Globe and Mail: Lower electricity rates? Don't fall for Premier Wynne's power move

theglobeandmail.com

Thu Mar 2 2017, 6:02pm ET

Section: Other

The rise in the cost of electricity in Ontario over the Liberal Party's time in office has been staggering, and painful. Here's just one example of how it has gone up:

In November, 2007, the highest rate for households, during peak hours, was 8.7 cents per kilowatt/hour. Less than a decade later, it's the lowest rate - the one you get for using your dryer at midnight. The highest rate, for use during peak hours, is 18 cents per kWh.

That 107-per-cent increase in the peak rate is roughly six times the rate of inflation over the same period.

The province's manufacturing sector, meanwhile, has been walloped by the highest industrial rates in Canada, and among the highest in North America, according to the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario.

The blame for this falls squarely on the consecutive Liberal governments of former premier Dalton McGuinty and his successor, Premier Kathleen Wynne, in power since 2003. Their mismanagement of Ontario's power system has led to today.

And now Premier Wynne is trying to cash in on that legacy. In an act of high political chutzpah, she has announced a plan to lower consumers' electricity bills by 25 per cent just in time for next year's general election.

Do not be fooled. She isn't fixing the electricity system mess. She isn't lowering the extortionate system costs created by a decade of poor choices and mismanagement of the province's power system. She's simply rigging consumers' bills during an election year.

Some of the reduction comes from the elimination of the provincial sales tax on electricity sales. Most of the rest comes from the refinancing of the provincial utility's debts - a move that will cut repayment costs by \$2.5-billion a year over the next 10 years, but add \$14-billion in interest costs over 30 years.

News flash: Extending your mortgage repayment period doesn't actually lower your mortgage.

Basically, a Liberal premier has found yet another way to make Ontarians pay more for electricity, but this one is selling it as the act of a thoughtful government coming to the aid of consumers beleaguered by high electricity generation costs that somehow, gosh, just got that way on their own.

How rich is that. Ontarians may welcome this immediate dose of much-needed cash-flow relief, but in the long run they'll be the ones paying for it. As voters, they should think twice before rewarding the Liberals for this gift bought with their own money.

Follow this link to view this story on globeandmail.com: (www.theglobeandmail.com)»)

© 2017 The Globe and Mail Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Globe and Mail: Wynne's new plan promises hydro-rates relief for Ontario residents

By: Shawn McCarthy and Greg Keenan

Thursday, Mar. 02, 2017

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ontario-wynne-slashes-hydro-rates/article34183180/>

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne unveiled a new hydro plan Thursday that targets lower residential rates but provides only modest relief to industrial customers who say soaring electricity costs are driving business out of the province.

Through legislation it intends to pass before summer, the provincial Liberal government will cut residential rates by 25 per cent, including a previously announced 8-per-cent reduction. The plan also promises deep price cuts to rural and remote customers who faced dramatic increases over the past decade, and will boost subsidies for low-income households.

Business customers will not benefit from reduced rates but will instead see an expanded rebate program for those that can shift their consumption to off-peak hours. Companies in Northern Ontario and rural areas will also benefit from a reduction in delivery charges that have driven up bills in less-populated regions.

Faced with a political backlash over soaring power bills, Ms. Wynne said the plan would deliver the largest reduction in electricity costs in the province's history.

To pay for the near-term relief, the province will add \$25-billion in interest costs over 30 years as a result of stretching out financing for existing generation projects. It will also shift \$2.5-billion over three years in costs from ratepayers to the general provincial account.

“Electricity rates in Ontario will come down significantly, they’re going to stay down and everyone will benefit,” Ms. Wynne said in a news conference.

The Premier faces an election in spring 2018, and rising electricity bills have been cited as a major factor in her slumping support in opinion polls. With Thursday’s plan, opposition critics complained the Liberal government is taking on significant debt that will be left for future taxpayers and ratepayers to cover.

“They’re making our kids and grandkids pay for the mistakes they’ve made on the energy file over the last eight years,” Conservative MPP Todd Smith said. “There’s a massive price to what they’re doing and they’re not addressing the root cause as to why electricity prices are as high as they are.”

In an interview, Ms. Wynne compared the effort to extending the amortization period of a mortgage to bring down monthly payments. Though critics note the assets in this case – electric generating stations – belong to the developers not the province.

“The accusation that we’re spreading this over more than one generation is absolutely true,” Ms. Wynne said in a telephone interview. “That’s the point of what we’re doing – we’re asking a future generation to help pay for an asset that they’re actually going to use.”

Not every customer will benefit from the 25-per-cent rate reduction. Industrial users say there is little in the strategy to deal with higher rates that make it difficult for them to compete with firms in neighbouring states.

Byron Nelson, president of Leland Industries Inc., a Toronto-based manufacturer of bolts, screws and other fasteners, said his company is scouting for a location to open a new factory, but will build the manufacturing facility in Illinois, Ohio or some other Midwest state. Ontario’s high hydro rates are driving that decision, Mr. Nelson said.

“We will invest no longer in Ontario,” he said Thursday, about a year after completing an expansion of Leland’s Toronto manufacturing operations. Electricity costs in the U.S. states Mr. Nelson is considering are about half those in Ontario, he said, and are even lower in Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan.

“We’ve got to be competitive,” he said. “Our provincial government doesn’t understand that word.”

Large manufacturers, such as the Canadian units of the Detroit Three auto makers, are also worried about the competitive position of their operations in Ontario.

The announcement of lower rates for residential consumers represents a lost opportunity to reduce hydro charges for FCA Canada Inc. (Chrysler), Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd. and General Motors of Canada Co., said Mark Nantais, president of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers’ Association, a trade association and lobby group for the three auto makers.

"From what we can tell, there's nothing there that would reduce our costs and help us improve our competitiveness," Mr. Nantais said.

Although the Canadian operations won substantial commitments in the latest round of union agreements, the industry worries it will have trouble attracting future investments, particularly as U.S. President Donald Trump plans to cut corporate income-tax rates and, potentially, throw up protectionist barriers.

Mr. Nantais said car companies are too tightly tied to production schedules to take advantage of the program offered by the province that provides rebates for companies that can shift power consumption to off-peak hours. The Liberal government expanded that industrial conservation initiative to include more small businesses.

"I think this is going to make us more competitive because we are capturing those businesses [in the conservation program], and I think it puts us in a good position," the Premier said. She added the electricity costs are not top of mind for most businesses that are investing or expanding in Ontario, but rather they look for a highly skilled work force.

Editor's Note: A previous version of this story underestimated the interest cost at \$14-billion; in fact, the interest over the long-term would be \$25-billion.

Report Typo/Error

Toronto Sun: Wynne shops for votes

By: Mike Strobel

Thursday, March 02, 2017

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/03/02/wynne-shops-for-votes>

If you're looking to wangle something out of Kathleen Wynne, now's the time.

She's at 11% approval and she's desperate.

So, city tolls on the Gardiner? Gone! Never mind that her own government is mad for HOV lanes and other eco-nonsense.

Provincial land transfer tax? Zap! A \$4,000 rebate for young home buyers/voters. Which is like a mugger giving you back bus fare.

And, now, hydro bills? Slashed! By 25%. Voters will LOVE it! Never mind that she is bribing you with your own money.

Where do you think that 25% is coming from? Mars? No, Uranus, if you are an Ontario taxpayer.

Ms. Wynne has gifted \$14 billion in interest to your kids and grandkids.

But voters will LOVE it!

What a scam. We have not seen the likes since 19th-century Canadian politicians offered whisky, pork and flour for votes. They called it “treating.”

At least they bought you with their money. Ms. Wynne is “treating” us with our own taxes.

Can’t blame her, really. Richard Nixon had higher approval ratings — even at the height of Watergate.

Wynne and her Liberals are no strangers to miracle comebacks, despite umpteen scandals. This time, though, she needs to pull out all stops.

As her volunteer speechwriter, I’ll do my bit. Here’s a draft of her next vote-shopping trip:

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the first day of the rest of my political life. I hope you brave journalists, especially from the Star, enjoyed your free ride on the DVP.

I am delighted to announce to Ontarians that my government is promising a chicken in every pot. Yes, Herbert Hoover was first with the idea, in the 1928 U.S. election. So sue me.

Not only will every Ontario pot contain a chicken (if we win the election), you can also afford to cook it, thanks to our generous break on your hydro bill.

Speaking of chicken, previous governments, not mentioning names but rhymes with Paris, left transit in a terrible state in the GTA, which is chock-a-block with commuters. Who vote.

I am pleased today to announce a bold plan to ease their misery. First, the downtown subway relief line will be built by next Tuesday, or the next century, whichever comes last.

Next, we will open a line under the harbour to Centreville Station on the island, which I'm told is home to about 500 voters. Stay tuned for funding on that, too.

Oh, wait, I'm told my provincial treasurer have found a way to mortgage Queen's Park. The Pink Palace itself. Thirty-year term, twice the market rate, but, hell, we'll all be gone by then, anyway.

Next, my labour minister will table a bill to ban salary caps on Ontario NHL teams. This will enable the Toronto Maple Leafs to buy their way to a Stanley Cup. The only condition: They wear a picture of me on their jerseys.

We have offered the NHL two provincial parks and the Welland Canal to swing the deal, which may be problematic in the long run. But if you're a Leafs fan of voting age, who cares?

This is just a start, I promise. I get it. I feel your pain. I want to help. At least until June 7, 2018.

But please (she lowers voice)... don't tell your kids and grandkids.

I'd look awful in tar and feathers.

CBC News: Premier tells Amherstburg horse trainer she played role in hydro cuts

CBC.CA News

Thu Mar 2 2017, 12:47pm ET

Section: Windsor

Byline: CBC News

An Amherstburg, Ont. horse trainer, whose viral letter to Kathleen Wynne about hydro rates earned her a personal meeting with the premier, said she's pleased with cuts the Liberals proposed Thursday.

Libby Keenan, who operates Sunhall Equestrian Center, said she received a call from Wynne around 8 a.m. this morning where the premier told her about the cuts before they were officially announced.

Wynne told Keenan she played a role in making the cuts a reality.

"Whether or not it's an election ploy, I don't care," Keenan told CBC News. "I care about my bottom line and it's going to improve."

Average residential hydro bills are expected to drop by 17 per cent this summer as the government postpones financing costs for building and refurbishing power plants, according to the plan announced by Wynne Thursday morning.

Overall rate reductions should drop to 25 per cent when factoring in an exemption of the province's portion of the HST. That exemption kicked in Jan. 1.

Keenan applauded how quick Wynne followed through on her promises to cut electricity costs. She was quick to share her thoughts on Facebook after taking the call from the premier.

"I thought it was respectful of her to call herself and not have an assistant make contact," wrote Keenan in a post on Facebook. "She gave me her word on these issues and she is making good on that. I achieved what I went for."

© 2017 CBC. All Rights Reserved.

CTV News: GTA residents wary of hydro bill cuts

By: Kayla Goodfield

Thursday, March 2, 2017

<http://toronto.ctvnews.ca/gta-residents-wary-of-hydro-bill-cuts-1.3308970>

Ontarians may soon be paying less on their hydro bills but ratepayers in the GTA seem to be split on whether lower costs are a good move for the future or not.

An informal web poll conducted by CTV News Toronto found that out of 513 voters, 51 per cent of people are not in favour of the cuts, while 49 per cent of people are.

Along with the poll, many people tweeted their comments regarding the cost decrease.

By this summer, Ontario's soaring electricity bills will see a decrease of approximately 17 per cent. This

drop comes prior to the provincial Liberals bid for re-election.

Despite the decrease in costs for business owners and residents across the GTA, people are weary of how this will affect them personally.

Some said they thought it was a good first step but that more needs to be done to keep costs low.

GTA resident Leo Hynes told CTV News Toronto that he recognizes the costs will be cheaper but he still thinks it's too high.

"It certainly makes a difference but it has been too high for too long so I think Ontarians are only getting what they deserve," Hynes said. "It should have been done a long time ago."

On the other hand, small business owner Bala Rasiah told CTV News Toronto that he is very happy with the announcement.

Rasiah said he is currently paying approximately \$900 per month for electricity at his restaurant, including kitchen appliances, staff and air conditioning and heating.

"I'm very happy, that's \$200 in my pocket," he said.

Paddy Breen-McGivern, the district manager of a frozen food outlet in Port Perry, said the change will be very beneficial to them as they burn through electricity every day. In order to maintain all of their freezers at -18 C, they spend about \$5,500 per month on electricity. Breen-McGivern said the lower costs could lead to expansions for their business.

"I think it means we can look at hiring more, with expansion comes hiring," she said.

GTA resident John Smith said he wants to know where the Liberal government is coming up with the money to subsidize these costs for the whole province.

"I just want to know where they are getting it from," he said. "Is there going to be a toll on the road to make up for the difference?"

Despite these concerns, Smith said the cutbacks still would make a big difference for him as he would save \$75 per month, which would add up to about \$1,000 for the year.

On Thursday, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne acknowledged that the bill for the province-wide relief will

in time come due to ratepayers, costing billions in extra interest payments.

Wynne said that although short-term cuts will cost more in the future, they are more fair because the current generation of hydro customers will not have to pay the heavier costs alone.

Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said the new plan is solely shifting the burden between the same group of people.

“Robbing Peter to pay Paul, but in this case, both Peter and Paul are taxpayers,” he said.

Brown said that despite the dramatic decrease now, those extra interest costs will be added back onto bills in the future.

With files from The Canadian Press

CTV News: 'It's just a Band-Aid': Reaction to hydro cost reduction plan

By: CTV Barrie

Thursday, March 2, 2017

<http://barrie.ctvnews.ca/it-s-just-a-band-aid-reaction-to-hydro-cost-reduction-plan-1.3308820>

A Barrie Butcher, who has been struggling with high hydro bills, calls the Wynne government's plan to cut costs “a Band-Aid.”

Lawrence Vindum says the government's plan to chop another 17 per cent isn't a lasting solution. He was forced to remove large freezers in order to cope with his bill.

“It's helpful, but it's not enough. I doubt it deals with the root cause of the problem. I think it's just a Band-Aid.”

The cut on electricity bills is coming with a price tag of up to \$1.4 billion a year in extra interest costs. Those extra costs will ultimately come due for ratepayers in the future.

However, the rate cut is welcome news to the United Way of Simcoe-Muskoka. The charity administers two programs that provide emergency money to residents who are at risk of having their hydro cut off.

“There are a couple of measures that we see that are going to improve at least the cost of utilities,” says Dale Biddell. “We have received over 4,500 applications since January and as I say, 1,500 have been approved and 500 more are pending.”

One of the programs is the low-income energy assistance program and the other is an emergency program for people who use electricity as their main source of heat.

The United Way hopes lower hydro bills will force fewer people to rely on these programs and put less pressure on their bottom line.

“We never have funds available at the end of the year.”

People can expect to see the changes on their bill by June.

With files from The Canadian Press.

TheBarrieExaminer.com: Liberals slashing hydro prices

Thursday, March 2, 2017

<http://www.thebarrieexaminer.com/2017/03/02/liberals-slashing-hydro-prices>

How do you feel about the 2018 Ontario election campaign beginning right now?

Because that's the signal from Premier Kathleen Wynne's plan to cut electricity rates by another 17% by the summer, bringing this year's reduction to 25%.

What other conclusion can be reached?

And make no mistake, the hydro cut is a desperate measure by a premier, and a Liberal party, that could be sent packing far into the political wilderness a year from June.

A Forum Research poll late last November put Wynne's approval rating at 13%, and the Grits at 24%.

About all Patrick Brown and the Progressive Conservatives have to do is not fall on their own swords to win the next election.

There has been some speculation about what Wynne and company would do to get back in the good books of this province's voters, but not much.

Is anyone really surprised it's come down to hydro costs?

The Liberals have been slammed for months now about soaring electricity rates, about their affordability, especially for rural customers.

This province's off-peak or cheapest electricity prices have nearly doubled between Nov. 1, 2009 and Nov. 1, 2016, according to the Ontario Energy Board.

And it's not like using hydro is an option for homeowners, business and industry.

People and companies can and have done much to conserve, but the lights need to be on, the machinery running.

The electrical bill still comes due.

It can be reasonably asked, of course, that if the Liberals can cut hydro rates by 25% this year – why couldn't it have been done earlier?

The plan for savings is to finance the costs of electricity generation contracts during longer periods of time.

Aside from the fact this will undoubtedly cost Ontario taxpayers more money, why couldn't it have been done months ago?

Because, this is all about politics. And positioning the Liberals for the next election.

Which is disappointing, knowing that we're little more than pawns in Wynne's political games.

And that the Liberals won't help with what ails average Ontarians until maximum political return is available.

Wynne would probably have preferred waiting until the spring budget for the 25% cut, but she likely feels this is rock bottom, and it's time to start heading up in the polls again.

Nice to be the premier's stepping stone.

BayToday.com: Ontario unveils plan to cut electricity rates by 17% on average this year

By: BayToday Staff

<https://www.baytoday.ca/local-news/ontario-unveils-plan-to-cut-electricity-rates-by-17-on-average-this-year-550502>

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne says residential hydro customers will see their bills drop by 17 per cent on average this year, thanks to a new plan she unveiled this morning during a joint news conference with Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, as the Liberals are calling it, means a 25-per-cent cut to residential charges, including the eight-per-cent bill reduction that kicked in Jan. 1 when the province exempted residential customers from the province's portion of the HST.

It's being reported that the plan was approved by the premier's cabinet yesterday, prior to today's announcement.

In a speech to the Economic Club of Canada on Feb. 24, Thibeault said Ontario's Green Energy Act is partially to blame for the high cost of power. The plan was designed to spur investment in renewable energy sources, and push energy production away from coal.

A noble goal, Thibeault said, but a poorly executed program that gives long-term energy contracts to private producers of renewable energy (wind, hydro and solar) at rates as high as 40 times fair market value.

It made sense at the time, the Sudbury MPP said, but in hindsight it drove up costs for consumers. Combine this with how Ontario opted to finance its \$50-billion plan to build new power plants and fix up old ones, and the government made a mistake, Wynne said today.

See: Wynne's hydro plan draws ire and praise

Cutting rates today, though, is a matter of changing how Ontario is going to finance those \$50-billion worth of upgrades.

Under Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, the province will refinance about \$28 billion of that \$50 billion. So, for the next four years, hydro rates will hover around or under the inflation rate. The interest on the refinancing will run to \$1.4 billion a year.

Of course, what this means is those interest costs will be paid by hydro customers at some point in the future (and after the next election).

CBC has reported that officials aren't sure how much power rates will jump after the four years of the plan are up.

SooToday.com: PUC likes government's hydro rate cut plan

By: Darren Taylor

Thursday, March 2, 2017

<https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/puc-likes-governments-hydro-rate-cut-plan-550582>

There is some mixed local reaction to the plan to cut Ontario hydro rates by 25 per cent, announced by Premier Kathleen Wynne Thursday.

Under the Fair Hydro Plan, beginning this summer, all residential hydro customers, many small businesses and farms, people with low incomes and those living in eligible rural communities would benefit from the rate reduction.

The 25 per cent reduction includes the eight per cent rebate introduced in January.

The government has stated it will bring the 25 per cent hydro rate reduction into being by refinancing payments on improvements it has made to the province's hydro system.

Those improvements, the government said in its announcement Thursday, include \$50 billion in generation, transmission and distribution of electricity and elimination of coal in electricity generation.

"This announcement is great news," said Giordan Zin, PUC supervisor of communications, speaking to SooToday Thursday.

"This is exactly what the Electricity Distributors Association (EDA, a lobby group which PUC is associated with) has been calling for, it's what we've been calling for, we are pleased to see the government take substantial action on this issue."

"It doesn't really change the PUC's operations, but what this does is give the benefit to the consumers who have needed it for some time," Zin said, adding "anyone who's paying a Sault PUC rate is already paying some of the lowest delivery charges in the province."

However, Joe Krmpotich, NDP candidate for the Sault riding in a yet-to-be-called provincial byelection, isn't as enthused with the Liberal government's plan.

"The interest costs (involved with refinancing in the Liberal plan) could be over \$14 billion over a 30 year period," Krmpotich said.

Under the Liberal plan, rate increases over the next four years would be held to the rate of inflation for everyone.

"There's no cap after those four years and the rates will shoot up again," Krmpotich said.

"They're claiming they're going to reduce the residential bills by 25 per cent, but the problem we have is it doesn't address the costs of privatization of Hydro One and oversupply of electricity," Krmpotich told SooToday.

"It's very important to return Hydro One to public ownership and control, ensuring it serves the public interest."

The NDP has stated it has a plan to cut electricity rates by up to 30 per cent.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP leader, will be in Sault Ste. Marie Friday and in Echo Bay Saturday to meet with mayors of small communities, and it is presumed Horwath will have more details on the NDP's own plan to cut hydro rates.

Ross Romano, Progressive Conservative candidate for the Sault riding, was not available for comment Thursday, but a news release from the Ontario PC party stated the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan is a "scheme devised to lower electricity bills by burdening Ontarians with \$14 billion in new interest payments over 30 years."

"The Ontario PCs are the only party that will stop the fire sale of Hydro One, prevent more pay hikes to energy executives, and stop signing more expensive wind and solar contracts by repealing the Green Energy Act," stated the Tory news release.

SouthwesternOntario.com: Walker: Fixing Kathleen Wynne's hydro mess will cost taxpayers \$14 billion

By: Bill Walker

<http://www.southwesternontario.ca/opinion-story/7168843-walker-fixing-kathleen-wynne-s-hydro-mess-will-cost-taxpayers-14-billion/>

QUEEN'S PARK — Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker says there is nothing fair about Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne spending \$14 billion of taxpayers' money to fix the hydro mess she and her Liberal government created.

"While rate relief is needed because Ontarians, businesses and public institutions are being walloped by skyrocketing hydro bills, I'm troubled that the Premier and her government are using taxpayers' money to provide the discount," MPP Walker said. "What is not fair and what the Premier isn't saying is that it's you, the taxpayer, who is paying for this discount and essentially covering a mess created by her and her out-of-touch government."

Premier Wynne, tagging her latest hydro relief scheme as the "Fair Hydro Plan", announced that electricity bills will be trimmed by about 25 per cent, starting this summer. She also promised that she would not hike hydro rates above the rate of inflation for four years.

"So, yes, you will on average pay 25 per cent less in hydro every month (for some time), but in return, you will pay the Liberal government more taxes and thus receive fewer services to balance it off," MPP Walker explained. "To this end, the Premier's promise from this morning that she has fixed skyrocketing hydro bills in Ontario 'for today and into the future' is pure myth."

MPP Walker noted that the government's announcement on hydro relief did not include any measures to cancel the expensive energy contracts. In fact, he added, the Liberals are scheduled to sign more energy contracts tomorrow despite Ontario running a surplus of power and paying Quebec and the United States up to a half a billion dollars each year to take its surplus.

"We remain the only party that is committed to stopping the bad contracts by repealing the Green Energy Act," said MPP Walker.

He also added that electricity prices are higher because the Liberal government wasted \$1.1 billion on the gas plants scandal, \$2 billion on Smart Meters that don't work, and, as confirmed by the auditor general,

because Ontarians have been forced to pay a shocking \$9.2 billion more than necessary for green energy contracts. Additionally, ratepayers will also continue to be overcharged \$170 billion for electricity — meaning over \$12,000 in excess costs for every Ontarian.

Since the Liberal government first took office, the average Ontario household's annual hydro bill has increased by more than \$1,000. As a result, as many as 600,000 families were unable to pay their hydro bills last year, with some 60,000 cut off from power.

"Again, this is no real fix — it's a scheme, a \$14-billion misconception, and it will cost you, your children and your grandchildren for many more years in reduced education, health care and social services."

MyKawartha.com: MPP Leal defends hydro distribution cuts of 25 per cent

By: Lois Tuffin

<http://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/7168737-mpp-leal-defends-hydro-distribution-cuts-of-25-per-cent/>

After 10 years of rebuilding Ontario's hydroelectrical system, it's time to give people a break, says Peterborough MPP Jeff Leal.

Premier Kathleen Wynne had just announced this morning that distribution rates will be cut by 25 per cent overall to help 800,000 residents, business operators and farmers pay their bills that had been rising exponentially.

"We've made a lot of new investments, rebuilding the system," says Leal, who came to power in October 2003, two months after a large blackout.

"The costs have grown far too quickly."

Wynne is moving forward with a 17 per cent reduction on monthly bills this summer atop the eight per cent rebate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax that took effect Jan. 1, according to the Toronto Star.

Overall, the 25 per cent cut will cost the provincial treasury about \$1.83 billion a year, although the books will still be balanced in the spring budget.

The move comes after the average residential hydro bill has jumped from \$91 a month in 2005 to \$156

last year, threatening the governing Liberals' re-election chances on June 7, 2018.

He says he has heard from taxpayers in the East City Coffee Shop and out on farm tours that soaring bills are hurting seniors and businesses. He noted that Premier Wynne has been taking calls from concerned citizens over the past three months as well, which spurred her and her cabinet to action.

Rates will drop more in rural areas and up to 100 per cent for First Nations residents living on reserves. The changes will affect all electricity users, whether they use Hydro One or a municipal service like Peterborough Utilities, Leal says.

Rates increases will be capped at two per cent until 2021.

On Feb. 1, Opposition Leader Patrick Brown visited a Peterborough County farm where Randy Bullock explained his bill had tripled over the previous decade. Hydro rates are expected to be a hot topic going into next year's provincial election.

The costs to subsidize hydro delivery will be apportioned over the longterm, Leal explains. While critics say this just leaves the debt to the next generation, Leal points to low interest rates as another reason to make the change.

"Now is a good time to phase debt," he says. "Interest rates are at a historic low. They are virtually zero per cent."

The interest rate for the debt would be one to 1.5 per cent.

Leal lists hydro investments like the third tunnel at Niagara Falls, the upgrading of the Darlington nuclear plant and run of the river improvements in Northern Ontario.

When asked about surpluses being sold off in the United States for less than the cost of energy production, he noted those rates are set by the International Energy System Operator. He added that nuclear plants run at a certain rate and cannot be shut off, but gas plants have more flexibility in terms of producing less energy when usage drops.

"This is a not a political move," Leal says, when asked. "We have an obligation to Ontarians to supply a reliable electrical system."

InsideHalton.com : Burlington Hydro customers looking at \$30 average savings on bills

By: John Bkila

<http://www.insidehalton.com/news-story/7168725-burlington-hydro-customers-looking-at-30-average-savings-on-bills/>

Burlington Hydro customers can expect an average monthly savings of approximately \$30 on their bills — this after the province announced it plans to lower electricity bills by a total of 25 per cent.

"We can say that preliminary calculations for a residential customer who uses 750 kWh (kilowatt-hours) per month, shows a savings of approximately \$30, before taxes," Christine Hallas, manager of corporate communications for Burlington Hydro, told the Post Thursday (March 2).

Hallas confirmed the average 25 per cent savings included the eight per cent discount implemented on Jan. 1.

The welcomed break for hydro customers starts this summer, according to a media release issued by the province today.

"The affordability of electricity has challenged many of our residential customers and we welcome the rate relief measures that the government has taken," said Gerry Smallegange, president and CEO of Burlington Hydro Inc.

"We're proud of the reputation we've earned of providing a safe and reliable source of power for our community. We look forward to working with the provincial government in implementing these changes."

The savings announcement is part of a system restructuring to address policy challenges and "ensure greater fairness," according to the province, adding hydro rate increases will be held to the rate of inflation over the next four years.

"Many small businesses and farms would also benefit from the initiative," stated the release. "People with low incomes and those living in eligible rural communities would receive even greater reductions to their electricity bills."

Electricity rates have risen for two reasons, according to the provincial government: decades of under-investment in the electricity system and the elimination of Ontario's use of coal and the production of clean, renewable power.

"The investments required to create this system have been borne by today's generation of ratepayers, yet the asset we have invested in is one which will endure for generations to come. Today's announcement will see us amortize that cost over a longer period, providing immediate rate relief," Burlington MPP and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport Eleanor McMahon, said in a released statement.

"We are also enhancing the rate structure, moving the cost of social programs, which support low-income Ontarians away from ratepayers. Finally, we are providing relief on distribution charges, and improving

and strengthening existing measures so even more small and medium-sized businesses will see reductions. I'm proud of the steps we have taken and know that this historic relief program will make a real difference in the lives of Burlington residents and all Ontarians."

The province said it also would be launching a new Affordability Fund to enhance the existing Ontario Electricity Support Program and Rural or Remote Rate Protection program, as well as provide on-reserve First Nations households with a delivery credit.

The new measures will cost the government up to \$2.5 billion over the next three years.

CKWS Kingston: New cuts 'too little, too late' according to local hydro customers

By: CKWS Newswatch

March 02, 2017

<http://www.ckwstv.com/2017/03/02/new-cuts-too-little-too-late-according-to-local-hydro-customers/>

Hydro rates have been all the talk at water coolers and coffee shops for a while, and now something new to talk about.

After a reduction of 8 percent on hydro bills late last year, Kathleen Wynne announced another 17 percent reduction that will begin this summer.

The move is being touted by this Queen's University Political Expert as an early campaign move from Ontario's Premier.

Christo Aivalis: "If she can lower hydro rates by 25 percent, why hasn't she already lowered hydro rates by 25 percent? It's like if that's an option politically, then why hasn't that been considered yet?"

Local MPP, Liberal Sophie Kiwala says she doesn't buy into talk that the move was politically motivated.

Sophie Kiwala: "I'm not seeing this through a political lens. I'm looking at this as the right and responsible thing to do."

Rural residents have been hardest hit by rising electricity costs, specifically from elevated delivery charges.

They're ecstatic to learn of the Premier's promise, but say this move alone isn't enough for the Liberals to regain their trust.

"It kind of makes you wonder, right? Where was this years ago – it might have helped people save their homes."

"Too much damage has been done. She's made a reputation for herself. So if people vote for her again they're just asking for more of the same I would think."

"She's probably come to the realisation that if she doesn't do something, she's going to be gone the next election. I think at this point in time, people won't forget."

The opposition energy critic agrees. Saying hydro bills might go down over the short term – but this latest move is simply delaying the inevitable.

Todd Smith: "That's the thing that we need to drive home. The government hasn't realised how and why they've made the mistakes that they have. They're just making us pay over a longer period of time."

Smith calls the energy plan a desperate move by a desperate premier, and that instead of dealing with root cause of the problem, they're simply extending the mortgage on billions of dollars worth of debt – which will create a bigger problem further down the road.

AM900: Ontario to slash hydro bills by 25%, but ratepayers may face higher costs in the future

By: Adam Miller

March 02, 2017

<http://www.900chml.com/2017/03/02/104102/>

The Ontario government is slashing electricity rates by an additional 17 per cent in an effort to provide immediate relief to ratepayers ahead of a fast-approaching 2018 election, but the rate cut comes with an estimated \$1.4 billion per year in added interest costs.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan would see electricity rates reduced for ratepayers across the province, amounting to 25 per cent when compounded with Ontario's eight per cent HST hydro rebate that took effect Jan. 1, and will hold with the rate of inflation for four years.

"This is the largest cut to electricity rates in the history of Ontario," Premier Kathleen Wynne said during a

press conference Thursday.

"In dollars and cents, the exact benefit will vary by household. But if, for example, your monthly bill adds up to \$135, this cut will drop it down to around \$101."

The rate cut is expected to take effect this summer, with ratepayers to see the effect of the reduction on their June 1 bill.

Wynne said the province would achieve the rate reduction by "refinancing" long-term power generation contracts to even longer terms, not unlike extending a mortgage over a longer amortization period, but said it would not affect the government's ability to maintain a balanced budget in 2018.

"Over time, it will cost a bit more. And it will take longer to pay off. But it is fairer – because it doesn't ask this generation of hydro customers alone to pay the freight for everyone before and after," she said.

"The burden will now be shared more evenly and more appropriately."

"That's a hard pill for Ontario to swallow, that this government's errors in energy is going to cost them \$14 billion in interest," he said, adding the Liberals continue to move forward with green energy contracts that he said should be reviewed.

"You think they would have learned about these bad contracts and now they're doing the same mistake again? How can you ask for Ontarians to accept your apology when you're going to do the same thing all over again?"

Brown added the PC party would announce hydro relief measures in the coming weeks and that electricity rates had risen to among the highest in North America under the Liberal party.

"I think that there is still a lot of people who aren't going to be buying these Liberal lines," he said. "The reality is on the watch of this government hydro bills have gone up 400 per cent and now they're saying we're going to offer you 25 per cent relief, it's still a 400 per cent increase we've seen on their watch."

NDP energy critic Peter Tabuns said that despite the rate cut the province will face higher costs long-term, as the debt incurred from the plan will add up over the next decade.

"It looks like we're talking in the tens of billions of dollars to buy down hydro rates in advance of the election ... We don't know what is going to be the total cost for doing this, we have their guess and we're talking in 10, 20 and 30 billion dollars. It's a lot of money," he said.

"She's put a very large Band-Aid on this problem, a very expensive Band-Aid, but she hasn't dealt with the

structural issues, she hasn't even talked about them."

Progressive Conservative Party Leader Patrick Brown criticized the Liberal government's "shortsightedness" and "mistakes" on the hydro file, adding that interest costs would amount to at least \$14 billion over 10 years.

Additional measures were announced Thursday to give low income, northern and rural Ontario consumers additional savings, at a cost to the province of \$2.5 billion over the next three years.

"We can all agree that we have to help people who need that extra support. But ratepayers have been carrying the cost of those programs, not taxpayers. And that simply is not fair," Wynne said.

"As I have said, electricity is a necessity. So it only makes sense that we share the cost of making sure no one has to make those difficult decisions between heating their home and feeding their family."

Ratepayers in rural parts of Ontario would also see their distribution costs from local utility providers reduced and First Nations residential consumers would see the on-reserve delivery charge removed completely.

Ontario hydro rates have been the most contentious issue for the Wynne government as it moves closer to a 2018 election campaign.

Orangeville Citizen: MPP Sylvia Jones condemns Liberals over cost of hydro

By: Mike Pickford

March 2, 2017

<http://citizen.on.ca/?p=8302>

With hydro costs soaring to almost unmanageable levels for residents throughout Dufferin County in recent months, local MPP Sylvia Jones has called on Premier Kathleen Wynne to "step up and take action" in an attempt to prevent the provincial pandemic from getting any worse.

In addressing the premier during Question Period in the legislature last week, Ms. Jones noted that the high cost of electricity was "hitting all Ontarians hard" and condemned the provincial Liberals for allowing the issue to spiral out of control.

"This is one of those issues that just keeps on growing," Ms. Jones told the Citizen. "Whether it's people

coming into my office and speaking to me about their concerns, whether it's people sending letters in, or whether it's just having a friendly conversation out in the community – the message is exactly the same. People are very unhappy and I think it's time (the government) did something about it.”

While Premier Wynne did not directly respond to Ms. Jones' comments, Ontario's Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said the government has a plan in place to help alleviate rising hydro costs, but stopped short of revealing what that plan was.

“We're working on the fine details,” Mr. Thibeault said. “We'll be bringing forward that plan to help all Ontarians in the very near future. We recognize that this is actually getting to be unaffordable for some, and that's why we're acting.”

The cost of hydro has been a hot-button topic in Ontario for several years now, but the issue has intensified over the past 12 months with residents starting to see the direct results of a number of questionable decisions the Liberal government has made in recent times.

Top of that list, according to Ms. Jones, is the Ontario government's decision to lock itself into numerous hefty multi-year contracts with several green and renewable energy sources, which sees the province paying “an arm and a leg” for electricity, according to Ms. Jones, only to sell on its surpluses to our neighbours south of the border at a steep loss.

“When people ask me why we're in the position we find ourselves in today, I often point back to the auditor general's report that was released in 2014. One of the things highlighted in that report is that the Ontario government signed off on a number of high contracts for wind and solar energy, we're talking 20-year contracts at very high rates – buying electricity for 50 cents (per kilowatt hour), or in some cases a high of 82 cents (per kilowatt hour), and then selling it on for 8, 10 or 12 cents.”

She added, “It doesn't take you very long to figure out that somebody has to pay the difference, and that difference, so far, has been put on people's energy bills.”

In response to Mr. Thibeault's promise that the province was putting a plan in place to help reduce the cost of hydro for Ontarians, Ms. Jones said she's heard enough empty promises from government officials, calling for the energy minister to allow his actions to do the talking for him.

“It's a running joke at this point... There has always been a very consistent message (from the Liberals) saying they understand how Ontarians are feeling and they know that this is an issue they have to deal with, but at the end of the day that's all we've seen so far – words,” Ms. Jones said. “We haven't seen any actions yet, and I think it's high time we did.”

With a CBC report claiming the average Ontario household is currently paying more than double for electricity than it did ten years ago, Ms. Jones said this was “easily” the number one issue residents in her constituency were facing today.

“This is number one in Dufferin-Caledon, quite frankly I think this is number one in almost every

community in Ontario. I'm sure the different ministers and even the premier herself are hearing about this from their own constituents. It's such a huge issue that is affecting Ontarians everywhere," Ms. Jones said. "Families are being forced to make tough choices to either pay their hydro bills, or put food on their tables. Seniors living on a fixed income now have to figure out a way to stretch every dollar on order to make hydro payments."

Ms. Jones noted her office had opened 20 files in December of 2016 alone in order to help constituents deal with their hydro bills.

Reports emanating from Toronto on Wednesday indicated that Premier Wynne was set to announce the province would be cutting all hydro bills by 25 percent come the end of 2017, although her office would not confirm the plan when contacted by media. Keeping her ear to the ground down in Toronto, Ms. Jones offered her thoughts on how she thinks the Liberals will look to slash costs for residents.

"Based on what I'm hearing down in Toronto, and based on rumours circulating down at Queen's Park, it looks like the next thing the government is going to look to do is moving the delivery charge off of hydro bills and simply putting it onto the Ontario taxpayer in another way," Ms. Jones said. "Basically, they're looking to take it out of one pocket and putting it another."

She added, "I think there are other options, but they have to get this thing under control one way or another."

TV Transcripts (6 PM)

Global : Premier Wynne Announces Hydro Rate Reduction Plan And Draws Criticism

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 5:30 PM (1)

Premier Kathleen Wynne: In effect, this generation has been subsidizing not just those who came before, but those who will come next, and that's not right.

Anchor: The change of heart at Queen's Park is complete. Your hydro bills are going down drastically. But what does it mean for your kids and your grandkids? Thanks for joining us. I'm Farah Nasser.

Anchor 2: I'm Alan Carter. With that announcement from Premier Kathleen Wynne today, the average Ontario hydro customer can expect their bill to come down by on average 25 per cent.

Anchor: But all that money we save now will eventually have to be paid. And critics say that's unfair for future generations. Our coverage begins with Sean O'Shea tonight.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So we are here today.

Reporter: Premier Kathleen Wynne about to admit her own government is to blame.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: We have made mistakes in the way we structured Ontario's electricity system.

Reporter: That refurbishing that system should have been done differently.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: But the way we finance those investments was a mistake.

Reporter: And with the price of electric power ballooning, that's about to change for consumers.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: The largest reduction in electricity rates in our province's history, because we know families need help now.

Reporter: Beginning in June, the government says, your bill will go down.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Our plan will lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential consumers in the province.

Reporter: Rural customers, the hardest hit of all, could see cuts of up to 51 per cent, that cut paid for by putting off the repayment of debt, by financing the cost of hydro generation over a 30-year window.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So re-mortgaging the system, in effect, is a much fairer way of approaching this.

Reporter: But the Liberals' critics say it's unfair for future generations who'll be saddled with higher debt.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: I'm happy that there will be hydro relief. We believe hydro relief is necessary. What I'm concerned about is that the government is not addressing some of the structural problems.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: She's put a very large band-aid on this problem, a very expensive band-aid, but she hasn't dealt with the structural issues. She hasn't even talked about them.

Reporter: Like higher costs for wind and solar power and long-term energy contracts responsible for much of that growing debt.

Jagmeet Singh, Deputy NDP Leader: It makes no sense. What they're doing is doubling down on a bad plan. They're not addressing the root problems of why we're in this position.

Reporter: Under mounting political pressure, the Liberals are hoping consumers will focus on a lower bill and not the cost years from now.

Tom Adams, Energy Consultant: Ontario has lost the kind of political wherewithal to pay its power bills as they come due. And so we've just decided to kick it down the road.

Interest rates on the plan to pay off Ontario's hydro debt over time could cost an extra \$14 billion. So that old ad expression from back in the 70s, "You can pay me now or you can pay me later," well the Liberals have decided to make consumers pay less now but much more over time. And as for those price increases, the Liberals are saying that they will limit price increases going forward to no more than the rate of inflation, say about 2 per cent, but only for four years. No guarantees after that.

Global : Patrons At Wexford Diner React To New Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 5:33 PM (2)

Anchor: Now to the most important stakeholders in this, all of us. I spent the afternoon talking hydro with some folks at the Wexford, a popular diner here in Toronto. And you know every person I chatted with said the same thing: The government's move is see-through.

Anchor: Hi, mind if I sit down?

Unidentified 1: Sure.

Anchor: I wanted to chat with you about hydro. What do you think about the file right now and what's going on?

Unidentified 1: I think it's a lot of bamboozle by the Liberals, really.

Unidentified 2: Today my Hydro bill is – the minimum I get is \$280, in a bungalow 900 square feet.

Unidentified 3: I think this just means buying votes. There is an election coming up next year and I think

that is why she's, our Premier, is doing it.

Unidentified 4: It's a phony like a \$3 bill. You know? Hydro should be run like a business and the government today they do not run like a business. They spend money like water.

Unidentified 1: They're robbing Peter to pay Paul but by making our Hydro look cheaper by raising our taxes is not the answer.

Anchor: 25 per cent is not enough?

Unidentified 2: Not enough. Not enough. No.

Unidentified 3: They're just pushing it down the road and that is going to cost younger generations what we should be paying for.

Unidentified 2: It is crazy. It is because every month we see our bills going up month after month.

Unidentified 4: Every time there's an election they give you candies and then after that they give sour cream.

Global : Ontario To Refinance Long-Term Electricity Contracts To Lower Hydro Rates

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 5:59 PM (11)

Anchor: A live look at Queen's Park tonight, where relief is coming for all you hard-hit electricity consumers. But at what cost? Those high hydro bills we all pay? The Wynne government promises to slash about a quarter off your bill.

Anchor 2: But we're not off the hook just yet. That cut is going to us more in the years to come. Sean O'Shea is at Queen's Park to break this down for us. Sean?

Reporter: Well Alan, as you know, because you're down here so often, and you were down here this morning, the hydro issue has been the biggest single issue for the Liberal government for quite some time. And this morning, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced the government is going to address it, and in addressing it, we're going to see lower electric bills. Now what the government is essentially doing, in a nutshell, is further delaying paying for the refurbishments of infrastructure and paying for long-term energy contracts rather than deal with them now. So consumers are going to see lower bills, but they're going to

finance those increased infrastructure services over 30 years. As Kathleen Wynne told us in a news conference with Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault, consumers are going to get that welcome relief. The government is hoping that people are going to focus on that and not on the fact that it's going to cost billions more over time.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: The cut will go to all households that pay for electricity. There will asterisks, no loopholes, and no exceptions. Our plan will lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential consumers in the province. And for those living in rural communities or people living on low incomes, the break will be even greater.

Reporter: Now it turns out those hydro customers living in rural Ontario, the hardest hit, they are going to see the biggest increase, or the biggest decrease if you want to see it that way – they will see decreases of 51 per cent on their hydro bills when all of this rolls out in the spring. But that cap on the increases in rates going forward, the government says they will limit that to the rate of inflation, say about 2 per cent, but no guarantees beyond the next four years. That said, a lot of consumers are going to be happy.

Global : Global News Reviews Ontario's Downplaying Of Hydro Prices Over The Months

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 6:01 PM (12)

Anchor: Now at one point during her news conference today, the Premier anticipated a rather obvious question.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I am sure that this question will come from many people. Let me address the elephant in the room. Why did it take me so long to come to grips with this? And why am I only acting now?

Anchor: Why indeed? While hydro bills have been soaring higher and higher for years, the Wynne government often downplayed the issue. But then, it really began to hurt them in the polls.

Anchor: As late as last August, the Energy Minister was unwilling to characterize hydro costs as a crisis.

Reporter [clip]: You don't think it's a crisis?

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: Well I'm still not using the word 'crisis'.

Anchor: Then came a by-election loss in the Liberal stronghold of Scarborough-Rouge River in early September. A few days later, Wynne started using a new word in describing hydro rates.

Premier Kathleen Wynne [clip]: It is an urgent issue for the Minister of Energy:

Anchor: Two months later, at the Ontario Liberal's Annual General Meeting, Wynne sharpened her language further, admitting high hydro prices were her "mistake". But Wynne's approval rating remained low, and as more stories of winter disconnections piled up, an order went out to end the practice late last month, but the cost issue remained until today.

Premier Kathleen Wynne [clip]: And for some families, it has gotten to the point where they must choose between keeping the lights on and keeping food in the fridge. That is unacceptable. It is unacceptable to me.

Anchor: And you can find a more detailed timeline of the Wynne government's 180 on hydro prices at globalnews.ca/toronto.

Global : Global: Global News Examines How Hydro Rate Reduction Plan Impacts Future Generations

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 6:03 PM (13)

Anchor: The Premier likes to compare the energy system to your mortgage. What the government is doing is essentially changing the payment schedule from 20 years to 30 years.

Premier Kathleen Wynne [clip]: So re-mortgaging the system in effect and spreading those costs over 30 years is a much fairer way of approaching this.

Anchor: You are pushing this cost to another generation. You are pushing it down the line.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: No, you know, the reality is that people today are still paying and they have been paying and they will continue to pay, but they need to pay a fairer rate.

Anchor: Now that fairer rate for us today may not be appreciated by the next generation when the bill comes due. But for all of the talk about transformational change, very little in the system is actually changing. You have likely heard by now about the expensive long-term contracts Ontario signed with energy producers. Essentially, in return for the producer building and operating a power plant, whether it is gas, fire, or solar, the government guarantees an above market price for power that is then being fed into the grid. And the government is not touching those contracts despite calls to tear them up or renegotiate them. Perhaps the best way to explain this is with this video of a hot air balloon. Essentially the government is creating a hydro debt balloon and filling it with the difference between what we are going to pay after these rate cuts and the true cost of power. Plus, throw in borrowing costs of up to \$1.4 billion a

year, and up goes that balloon, then the idea is that debt balloon will be slowly deflated in the future.

[Video clip of Pee-wee Herman releasing air from a balloon]

Anchor: The trouble is the government doesn't really know how much all of this is going to cost in the long run. And this kind of thing is not new. In 2002, Ernie Eves froze hydro rates. In 2011, Dalton McGuinty brought in a 10 per cent hydro discount.

Premier Kathleen Wynne [clip]: I do not expect a celebration as we make these announcements today. People are struggling with electricity costs that are too much for their families to bear.

Anchor: The Premier may not expect celebrations, but just like premiers before her, she is hoping to curb anger over rising hydro prices. And with little more than a year until the provincial election, she is hoping to let a little air out of that balloon.

[Video clip of Pee-wee Herman releasing air from a balloon]

Global : Interview With Premier Wynne On Her Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 6:16 PM (19)

Anchor: Today, the Wynne government unveiled its long promised hydro rate relief package. Now it comes with the headline of 25 per cent off hydro prices but it includes the already implemented 8 per cent HST rebate – apparently 17 per cent off hydro prices did not have the same ring. To talk more about this, I'm joined from Queen's Park by Premier Kathleen Wynne. Premier, thank you for joining us.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: It is a pleasure, Alan. Thank you.

Anchor: Why go this way? Why decide to move the cost of the system further down the road to a new generation?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So we've done a couple of things, Alan. We are spreading the cost of the investments that we've made over a longer period of time. Right now, people are paying for investments that were necessary in the system and people are paying for those in higher electricity prices, steeply high electricity prices right now, and what we have said is, 'You know what? It will be fairer if we can instead of having those costs paid over 20 years, if we spread it over a 30-year period – because really the people who are paying electricity prices right now are paying for neglect that was in the system and investments that were needed because of that neglect, and that's years, that's all levels – sorry all parties that have formed government have not invested in the system over time and so, people are paying for that. And

they're also paying forward for assets that are going to be used for people in the future. So spreading those costs over 30 years rather than 20 years is a fairer way to go. But the other thing we have done, Alan, is we are going to move to take distribution costs down, because there are people who live in rural communities outside of urban centres who are paying proportionately very high distribution charges that they can't control, and we're going to bring those down as well.

Anchor: But why not attack the system and change it, because you did not go after these energy contracts. You left them all alone and your Energy Minister has admitted that those are too expensive and have had I believe in his words "sub-optimal outcomes".

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well we looked at everything, Alan. We really did. And there have been some voices that said you should just rip up those contracts. We looked at how we could renegotiate or change those contracts. It would cost hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars in the long-run. There are hundreds of contracts and so we determined, Alan, that that was actually going to be more costly to the system. There would be lawsuits, and what we decided was this was a much more fair way of bringing people's costs down. The other thing is it would take years. It would take years to make those changes in those contracts. So on the cost, on top of the time, what we know is that people need reductions right now. And you know that, Alan. You have been following this. You know that people have talked to you for months. The 8 per cent reduction that we have put in place in January is not enough. They need more people – people need to see greater reductions in their electricity bills and so that's why we are taking this course.

Anchor: Now Premier, you like to refer sometimes to your family and your grandchildren, especially when you talk about green energy programs, cap and trade, leaving the planet a better place, for example. I'm wondering how you explain to those same grandchildren about the bill you're going to hand them for the energy system?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, what I would say to them is that right now their mom and dad are having to pay a lot more for electricity which means they cannot do other things, you know? So I would say to any kids my grandkids' age – they are seven and five and three right now – and I would say to them you know, 'We want your mom and dad to be able to make sure that you have money for field trips and be able to take you places and be able to buy food for you and make sure that you have child care. We want your parents to be able to pay for those things, and so we are going to take their electricity prices down right now. That means that when you are their age, when you are a little bit older, you are going to have to pay some of that cost as well. But everybody will pay for assets that we will all use.'

Anchor: Premier, thank you so much for your time.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Alan.

Global National : Province Announces Bit Cuts To Hydro Prices In Ontario

Source: Global

Mar 2, 2017 6:33 PM (2)

Anchor: A big cut is coming to hydro prices in Ontario. For months we've been reporting on hundreds of people whose bills were so high, they've been unable to pay and have had their power cut off. Today, the provincial government announced some relief. Prices for residential customers will drop 25 percent. That will help people in the short term. But as Eric Sorenson explains, critics say slashing costs now means higher bills for future generation.

Reporter: The timing is familiar. About a year before the next provincial election, and electricity rates are being curbed just as previous governments have done.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: No politician or Premier wants to defend rising rates.

Reporter: But a tweak will not do this time. Hydro costs have become so steep and ratepayers so upset that Premier Wynne is refinancing.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: We asked one generation, today's generation, to unfairly shoulder the burden of nearly all of costs. We're refinancing the mortgage. And we're setting a new term that stretches over a longer period. Over time, it will cost a bit more.

Reporter: Here's how it's like the mortgage on your house. Suppose you're paying a thousand dollar month over 20 years - you'd pay out almost half a million dollars. Now, if you can't afford that, you refinance. You pay 25 percent less, pay it over 30 years, but with interest. In the end you'll pay more. Same goes for hydro rates. To save 25 percent, you'll pay longer and you'll pay more. By some estimates \$25 billion more over years. The opposition says the government is offloading a mess on to future generations.

MPP Todd Smith, PC Energy Critic: We know what they are going to try and do and they are going to make our grandkids pay for it.

Reporter: That is the plan - to have the next generation also pay for assets that should last until then. Wynne concedes her government also didn't get the expensive shift to clean energy entirely right.

Mark Winfield, York University: We're going take \$2.5 billion, which could have gone on hospitals or schools or transit, and use it effectively to subsidize the electricity system.

Reporter: And if it all looks like a way to get out of an immediate political jam...

Premier Kathleen Wynne: What that means in terms of their perception of me or government, is very much secondary.

Peter Graefe, McMaster University: I think it's really an attempt to turn the page because they know that as long as the question is hydro rates, they're going to be a political loser for them.

Reporter: Wynne says the changes are based on political considerations, but clearly hopes they'll contain the political damage. Eric Sorenson, Global News, Toronto.

CFTO : The Provincial Government Unveiled Their Hydro Rate Reduction Plan Today

Source: CFTO

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor: Cuts are coming to your Hydro bills. Details of the plan revealed today. The government calling it the fair thing to do. Critics have a different take. Good evening. We have extensive coverage of the Hydro rates reduction and what it means to you.

Anchor: When can we expect it? How much can we expect? And is there long-term pain to this game? We will begin with our Queen's Park reporter Paul Bliss. No denying we all want smaller bills to pay, but there's no free lunch to be had. Take us through this.

Reporter: Eventually we'll pay the piper, but the cuts are pretty dramatic. Household electricity bills have doubled in the last decade. We all know it's taking a political toll on the Liberals, finally. And today the Premier made a dramatic move to address all the public anger. It's an aggressive attack on Hydro bills and on her sagging popularity.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: For too long governments, my own included, have made mistakes in the way we've structured Ontario's electricity system. That has resulted in rates that are unfairly high.

Reporter: She says she hears the cries for help so she's cutting electricity bills by substantial 25 per cent for people in cities, up to 53 per cent in rural and northern Ontario. An average bill of \$135 drops to \$101 starting June 1st. There's additional savings of \$12 to \$75 a month for 800,000 rural customers up from 350,000 homes facing very high delivery charges.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: Downtown Toronto, downtown Sudbury, downtown London, you have 500 people on one pole. In the rural parts of our province you have 500 poles to get to one person.

Reporter: So how can this be done out of the blue? Increases will be held to the rate of inflation for four years. The government will stretch those global adjustment payments for billions in recent energy contracts over 30 years instead of 20 to ease the short-term costs. It's being compared to re-mortgaging a house, extending the payments over 30 years instead of just 20. The catch is, Ontarians will pay \$14 billion in interests over the decades. But this largest Hydro price reduction in Ontario history throws cold water on a hot issue the opposition had hoped to use against the Liberals in the next election.

Todd Smith, PC Energy Critic: They're simply mortgaging our kids and grandkids' future to the tune of \$172 billion to pay for their mistakes.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: Sometime over the next 5 to 10 years we'll be dealing with the higher costs that will come from the debt that's being incurred now to allow this government to get through an election.

Reporter: The Premier insists it's not about getting re-elected; it's about being fair to the people. Critics say this simply pushes the costs out to future generations, but having the generation now pay for the \$50 billion for improvements to the Hydroelectric-grid for 20 years instead of 30 would have simply led to higher bills in coming years, so this relief, something the Premier hopes will get to people in their households. Reporting live, I'm Paul Bliss. Back to you.

Anchor: Thank you, Paul.

CFTO : Ontarians React To The Hydro Cuts Announcement

Source: CFTO

Mar 2, 2017 6:03 PM (2)

Anchor: CTV's Austin Delaney is live in Pickering with the real life examples of how bloated Hydro bills affected you directly at business and at home. Austin, cuts are coming. Are people receptive to this plan?

Reporter: Well, hard-pressed to find anyone who doesn't want a cut in their Hydro bill, but surprisingly, we found a lot of people who say they will still pay too much for their electricity.

Reporter: It is a regular breakfast get-together for these retired TTC workers at Katherine's Grill. But today they are digesting the news that their Hydro bills will be slashed by 25 per cent.

Chris Walker, Retired: It will make a difference for everybody. Right now it shouldn't be what it is.

Reporter: They view the cut with a cynical eye.

Robert Carey, Retired: I think's probably an attempt to change public opinion before the next election, but I'm happy she's doing it.

Beth McCormick, Homeowner: Are you Orange?

Unidentified: Are you Orange?

Reporter: Not far from the restaurant, Steve and Beth McCormick play a board game with their twins. They've seen their Hydro bills skyrocket in the last year.

Steve McCormick, Homeowner: We were usually paying before somewhere around the 200 mark and it literally doubled in size.

Reporter: They welcome the break but wonder if it is enough to shore up Premier Wynne's sagging popularity in time for an election next year.

Beth McCormick: I'm not necessarily sure that this is going to be the best way for them to get back into the game to win the most votes. I just think that there's been enough damage done.

Reporter: At the almost perfect frozen food outlet in Port Perry, they burn through electricity.

Paddy Breen-McGivern, Almost Perfect Frozen Food: As you can see, you know, we run at -18.

Reporter: Keeping all the freezers at the right temperature means a Hydro bill around \$5,500 a month. This is a game changer, the district manager tells me.

Reporter: Do you think this means raises for employees and things like that or

Breen-McGivern: I think it means we'll be able to look at, you know, hiring more. With expansion comes hiring.

Reporter: A dozen stories today, now the financial wiggle room to open others.

Reporter: One of the waitresses who lives here told us she lives in a townhouse nearby. It's heated by baseboards. She pays about \$340 a month for Hydro. Too much for that and internet. So internet went out the window. Hydro bill got paid. Reporting live, I'm Austin Delaney.

Anchor: Thank you, Austin.

CFTO : CTV News Interviews A Resident Who Heard About Hydro Cuts From The Premier Herself

Source: CFTO

Mar 2, 2017 6:21 PM (17)

Anchor: We turn to our coverage of the Hydro rate reduction plan and one particular taxpayer being credited with pushing the Premier to make the cuts. CTV's Zuraidah Alman joins us with that now. Zuraidah.

Reporter: Well, Michelle, in the public outcry over soaring Hydro rates, she was one Ontarian who actually got the ear of the Premier. Libby Keenan said, if she learned anything from this experience it's that if you want change you have to speak up. At 8:00 AM this morning, Libby Keenan's phone rang. It was the Premier of Ontario. She had good news for the horse farm owner.

Libby Keenan, Horse Farmer: It's a surprise, but not, because I was determined I was not getting off this train until something happened.

Reporter: And that something? Queen's Park announcement that Hydro bills will be dropping up to 25 per cent by the summer may have been due to Keenan's determination.

Keenan: How much do I have to pay for the privilege of shovelling manure seven days a week?

Reporter: On January 5th, she wrote an angry Facebook post over her \$600 Hydro bill, a post that went viral and got her a meeting with the premier. This morning, Kathleen Wynne says Keenan was one of the few who got a phone call just before the official announcement.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: And I thank Libby for her advocacy because she raised a number of the issues we're addressing.

Reporter: issues like high distribution charges and the idea of an affordability fund.

Premier Wynne: She actually planted the seed of the idea of an affordability fund because she talked to me about, you know, having to roll up blankets to keep the air from coming in around her windows.

Reporter: That fund will allow people to apply for upfront money to make energy-saving retrofits like drafty windows.

Keenan: I think it's real progress.

Reporter: Is there more to be done? Keenan believes there is, but she says this is a good first step.

Keenan: Democracy requires two sides, the governing side and the electorate, and there has to be a dialogue, and I think that dialogue has started. That's worth a lot to me.

Reporter: So this battle may be won, but for Keenan, the war is not over. She will be one of many leading the way at a march and protest in April that will wind its way through the downtown core to Queen's Park. The message this time, stop privatizing, keep Hydro public. I'm Zuraidah Alman. Ken, back to you.

CFTO : Premier Kathleen Wynne Talks About The Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CFTO

Mar 2, 2017 6:23 PM (18)

Anchor: And the Premier joins us now to talk about this. I guess there were a lot of Libby the horse farmers out there that you were listening to. You know, before we talk about where we're going, let's talk about where we've been, how we ended up in this situation. You talked about mistakes.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I talked about Liberal, NDP, Conservative governments not making the investments that needed to be made in the system so that by 2003 we were looking at a pretty degraded electricity system. And we've made investments over the last 10-plus years to build new transmission lines, to build new towers in the north, dams in the south. So we've made a lot of investments in the system, and a second issue that we've had to deal with, and a mistake that has been made, is that a lot of these costs we've asked this generation to pay for when, in fact, the assets that have been built and the changes that have been made are going to last for many generations to come.

Anchor: If you were look 10 years in the future, what are the energy prices going to be compared to today?

Premier Wynne: We've said for the next four years increases will be at the rate of inflation around 2 per cent and then as we developed a long-term energy plan we'll see what those prices and increases will be over the long term. What we know is right now people need the relief. They need to know that that reduction is going to stay in place over time and that electricity bills won't jump up in price over the couple of years.

Anchor: What do you say to cynics who talk about this as a re-election ploy and wonder why it wasn't done last year?

Premier Wynne: Well, it's a good question in terms of how long it's taken us. You know, for some time, over a year we've looked for ways to reduce costs. We renegotiated the Samsung contract and that took over a billion dollars out of the system. We made the decision not to invest in new nuclear and took 8 per cent off of people's bills as of this January. But all of that turns out not to be enough. And so that's why, since last November, we've looked for more ways to reduce people's electricity bills and that's the plan we brought forward today.

Anchor: But you know some are saying it's an election ploy.

Premier Wynne: Well, people may say that. What I know is, when people get their bills this summer they will see an average 25 per cent reduction that will help them to look after their families and will relieve them of a burden that's been a lot to carry over the last few years. People in rural communities, as well Ken, will see more of a reduction because many people in rural communities are paying a distribution charge that's exponentially higher than people in urban communities and so on top of the 25 per cent they may see another 10, 15 per cent reduction and that will help them with those very high distribution costs.

Anchor: Premier, I appreciate you sitting down to explain this further.

Premier Wynne: Thanks very much.

Anchor: Thank you.

Premier Wynne: Take care.

CityTV : Premier Wynne Announces 25 Per Cent Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CityTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:07 PM (4)

Reporter: I'm Cristina Howorun and this is my hydro bill, about \$150 for my one-bedroom plus den. But come this summer, the Liberals are planning to slash that rate by a full 25 per cent.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: We are bringing forward today, as the Premier has mentioned, the largest reduction in electricity rates in our province's history.

Reporter: A 17 per cent reduction coming to your bill this summer, in addition to the 8 per cent HST slash from January.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: People are struggling with electricity costs that are too much for their families to bear.

Reporter: Primarily because since 2009, energy bills have skyrocketed by 70 per cent under the Liberals for the average consumer. But this rate cut won't be cheap either. When you add the costs of the HST hydro cut from January and the Liberals' new Fair Hydro Plan, taxpayers will be on the hook for an additional \$5.5 billion over the next three years. That's because government is extending its mortgage per se on energy sector upgrades.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Because these assets, the things we have built, are going to last much longer, that 30-year time period makes much more sense.

Reporter: Wynne says it's a more fair way to pay for energy with everybody, including those not even born yet, absorbing some of the costs of distribution to rural areas, subsidies for low-income households and costly green energy infrastructure like solar panels and wind turbines.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Over time, it will cost a bit. That's true. And it will take longer to pay off.

Reporter: Although the average life span for solar panels is only 20 years and turbines are lucky to last 25.

Tom Adams, Energy Analyst: This is buy now, pay later. You know, so the power we're consuming today will not be fully funded.

Reporter: Energy Analyst Tom Adams says this isn't the best way to cut rates.

Adams: We put an overall burden on future generations of ratepayers and taxpayers at a rate of over – like well in excess of \$4 billion, \$4.3 billion a year of new liabilities created from what's happened here.

Reporter: And yet despite these new costs, the Premier says the province is still very much on track to deliver a balanced budget next year.

CityTV : Opposition Says The Government's Hydro Plan Does Not Address Structural Issues

Source: CityTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:09 PM (5)

Reporter: And as you'd expect, the opposition was quick to slam the Liberals' hydro plan.

Jagmeet Singh, NDP MPP, Bramalea-Gore Malton: The Liberals said to us they could not build infrastructure but for selling off a public asset. They needed to sell off this public asset to effectively raise \$4 billion. Now, they're taking out a \$40 billion loan to reduce the cost of electricity. They're reducing it, they're actually just stretching it out over more time. Our plan is very clear. We're saying let's address the root problems. What are they? The oversupply. Why are we paying companies to take our oversupply of electricity? Two, why don't we address the root problems with bad contracts? Let's look at addressing those, renegotiating those. In addition, let's look at the time-of-use pricing. That make no sense.

Reporter: They've been hammering the Wynne government for months over skyrocketing hydro bills. Both opposition parties claim today's solution will cost Ontario taxpayers billions in years to come, something the Liberals do not deny. Both the NDP and Tories say the government didn't even attempt to get at the root of the problem.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: We believe hydro relief is necessary. What I'm concerned about is that the government's not addressing some of the structural problems. I'm concerned that we're not focusing on the bad contracts, the generation issue. For starters, we would stop the sale of Hydro One immediately, if I was premier tomorrow. We'd rein in some of these executive salaries. We would look at LRP 1. We would dismantle the Green Energy Act. We would deal with the surplus generation.

Reporter: By the way, in case you missed my interview with Premier Wynne in the last hour, we'll bring you some of that in the next few minutes.

CityTV : Interview Highlights With Premier Wynne On Her Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CityTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:28 PM (12)

Reporter: Well it's been a big day here at Queen's Park. The Liberal government announcing they're going to give hydro relief to Ontario residents, which has been a sore point as they keep opening bigger and bigger hydro bills. They're going to get 25 per cent relief. Now in case you missed it, I had a candid chat in the last hour with Premier Kathleen Wynne about the timing of this announcement, and as many residents say, it is probably coming years too late. I also asked her if this is an attempt to shore up party support because her party has been doing so badly in the polls. This is what she had to say.

Reporter: Are you doing this to save your political job?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So we have been looking for – for some time, so not just starting in November but for a couple of years we've been looking for ways to take electricity costs down.

Reporter: But even just a couple of years isn't long enough to have reacted to this situation that for many families is a crisis.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, but what I'm saying is that, over the last couple of years, it has become more acute. And if you look at the way electricity prices have been going up, it's been the last few years that they've gone very, very high, very, very quickly. So we put in place the Ontario Electricity Support Program. We put the 8 per cent in place. We renegotiated contracts like the Samsung contract. But all of that together, Cynthia, wasn't enough.

Reporter: There is a discernible change in temperature in this province. People are angry at the Liberals. They blame the Liberals. They blame you for these skyrocketing hydro costs. At what point would you step down?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I have a job to do and I'm doing my job.

Reporter: So you're going to run in the next election no matter what?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I'm running in the next election.

Reporter: Even if the polls are dismal and perhaps a predecessor might have a better shot?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: You know, polls – the polls that are important are the polls on election day. I made a commitment in 2014 that I would implement our plan. I've been implementing our plan, and at the same time responding in a responsible way to people's concerns. The electricity prices is a huge concern, and it's my responsible as premier to fix that.

Reporter: But is this not all about positioning yourself so that you could have another election win? I mean we've seen a lot of the announcements. You threw John Tory under the bus over the road tolls knowing that that would not go over well with the 905. You just signed – offered deals to teachers early, you know, to avoid any labour disruption. Is this all part of a grand, you know, path to try to be premier again despite the odds?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, so here's the thing. I mean if we look at those decisions in one at a time, the tolling decision was about affordability for people. It absolutely was. There had not been regional discussion. People in the 905 –

Reporter: But you led him to believe that he could go ahead with it and you would give your blessing.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I'm not philosophically opposed to tolls. We have high occupancy toll lanes but people have options. But there was an affordability issue that had not been addressed and you know there had not been a regional discussion. If we look at labour peace, I mean you know we've been talking about labour peace in education for a very long time and it's very important to me that kids have that peace in their schools, that teachers are able to teach and not be worried about labour disruptions. So it's absolutely part of what I believe is important to have that labour peace in the system whether there's an election coming or not. And the same goes for electricity prices, whether there's an election or not. There's always a political narrative. I'm a politician. There's always a political story.

Reporter: Can a politician stay too long in the job? Come on. You've seen it. Like at what point do you know –

Premier Kathleen Wynne: History will write that story, you know. I made a commitment in 2014 that I was going to implement my plan. I'm doing that. My job's not done and I'm going to continue.

Reporter: So the Premier says she is staying on. The next provincial election has to be held within the next 15 months.

CJOH : The Provincial Government Announces An Additional 17 Per Cent Cut On Hydro Bills

Source: CJOH

Mar 2, 2017 6:04 PM (3)

Anchor: Confirmation tonight that Hydro rates will drop another 17 per cent this summer. That's on top of the 8 per cent cut at the start of this year.

Anchor: Substantial savings for residential customers, but they do come at a hefty cost. CTV's Joanne Schnurr breaks down the savings and the costs for us tonight. Joanne.

Reporter: Well, Graham. We're talking billions here. The Premier says it's kind of like re-mortgaging your home. Stretching the payments out over a few more decades. Shifting the pain to ease the burden now. This is what's at the heart of the Hydro cuts. Choices for many Ontarians between keeping food in the fridge or keeping the lights on.

Helen Marinelli, Rural Ottawa Resident: That's how I am living like for the last year now, it's so tight. And I have kids, too, living the same way. Kids with my grandkids. It's tough, but 25 per cent? That will be good.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Electricity rates in Ontario will come down significantly.

Reporter: Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne taking increasing heat over hydro rates, announced a 25 per cent cut to all residential customers.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: The cut will go to all households that pay for electricity. There will be no asterisks, no loop holes, and no exceptions.

Reporter: They'll pay for it, in essence, by extending payments for nuclear plants, transmission lines, and green energy. Over 30 years instead of 20. Like re-mortgaging your home. For Timothy Werger, the cuts can't come soon enough.

Timothy Werger, Hydro One Customer: It would make a big difference for me. I live in the rural country, and I use electric heat, and my Hydro bills are \$800 a month.

George Darouze, Ottawa Councillor: I am happy for the quick relief. But what is the longer impact? What are we getting our kids into?

Reporter: These cuts will come at a hefty cost. The Liberals anticipate the price tag of giving us a break on Hydro to be about \$2.5 billion over three years. The conservatives call that a "shell game" and say the real price is probably closer to \$25 billion. Opposition parties say robbing Peter to pay Paul isn't the answer.

Todd Smith, PC Energy Critic: And we've seen what writing a plan on the back of a napkin can do. It can result in your grandkids paying the cost over 30 year period.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: He's put a very large band aid on this problem. A very expensive band

aid. But he hasn't dealt with the structural issues.

Reporter: Wynne's timing is critical here. We are 16 months away from the next provincial election. The Liberals are hoping this announcement will be enough to warm people up. Patricia.

Anchor: CTV's Joanne Schnurr reporting live for us tonight.

CJOH : CTV News Interviews Premier Kathleen Wynne About Hydro Cuts

Source: CJOH

Mar 2, 2017 6:06 PM (4)

Anchor: Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne joins us now about the changes to the electricity system. I've heard you earlier today say this has nothing to do with re-election and politics. I find that -- I'm not suggesting you're not telling the truth. I do find that hard to believe, because I think it's a politician, your job is to get re-elected. Surely you're looking at the polls. Surely you're looking at this issue as a major, major problem for the Liberals that could, in fact, end up defeating you in 2018.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So, you know, I don't think those are mutually exclusive ideas. Sure. There's always a political -- there's always a political reality that any politician is dealing with. That any leader is dealing with. But, Graham, the issue of people having to choose between paying their rent or paying their electricity bill or looking after their families adequately, that is a much more pressing issue than any political narrative, and that is the point I'm making. The reason that we need to act on this is there are families across the province, there are seniors paying too much for the electricity bills. It's not fair, and it has to be dealt with. That is what is driving these changes.

Anchor: Premier Kathleen Wynne, we appreciate your time from Queen's Park today. Thank you very much.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Graham.

CHCH : Premier Wynne Announces Additional 17% Cut to Hydro Bills

Source: CHCH

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor 1: The Tory opposition says the plan to save you more money on your hydro bill now will cost

billions of dollars more in interest over the years.

Anchor 2: Premier Wynne acknowledges now that, quote, over time it will cost a bit more. Elizabeth Hall explains.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Electricity rates in Ontario will come down significantly. They are going to stay down and everyone will benefit.

Reporter: Premier Kathleen Wynne announced this morning what had already been leaked yesterday. That her government plans to slash another 17% off hydro bills on top of the 8 per cent reduction that came into effect January. The plan is to cut the costs by refinancing the term of electricity generation contracts from 20 to 30 years. Similar to how some mortgages are refinanced.

Premier Wynne: Overtime it will cost a bit more. That's true. And it will take longer to pay off, that's also true. But it is fairer because it doesn't ask this generation of hydro customers alone to pay the freight for everyone who came before and everyone who's going to come after.

Premier Wynne: But that cost could come with an additional price tag of about \$1.4 billion a year in additional interest.

Peter Tabuns, NDP MPP: People will going to get stuck with bigger bills later down the road that they're going to have difficulty meeting them.

Todd Smith, PC MPP: This is the Liberals using public money to pay for their election campaign. We saw this back in 2011 in the election campaign when they cancelled the gas plant. That cost us 1.4 billion in tax payer money.

Reporter: Several other measures were announced to help lower income and rural residents.

Ferio Pugliese, Hydro One: It can go up as high as 50 per cent savings depending on where they're situated.

Reporter: While those measures will save low income and rural residents about \$2.5 billion over the next three years, that cost will shift to all tax payers. Elizabeth Hall, CHCH News.

CHCH : NDP Leader Discusses Hydro Bills with Business Owners in London

Source: CHCH

Mar 2, 2017 6:02 PM (2)

Anchor: NDP leader and Hamilton MPP Andrea Horwath was not in the legislature today. She was in London, Ontario discussing lower hydro bills with business owners and Oxford County Council. Earlier this week, Horwath revealed her party's plan to cut hydro rates by as much as 30 per cent in rural areas.

CHCH : Comparison of Hydro Rates Across Major Canadian Cities

Source: CHCH

Mar 2, 2017 6:03 PM (3)

Anchor: We've heard the opposition say Ontario has some of the hydro bills in the country so we decided to put that claim to the test. That however, proved to be difficult, some cities have more than one provider with each charging different fees so there is no way to accurately gauge what the average Ontarian pays for hydro, we are comparing cities instead. These numbers are for Manitoba Hydro. They're based on a survey of Canadian electricity bills from May of 2016. Numbers for Hamilton aren't available but as you can see Ottawa is way out in front with an average monthly bill of \$165, based on 1,000 kilowatt hours. Halifax not far behind. St. John's, Newfoundland and St. John, New Brunswick are in the middle with an average bill of roughly \$120. Way at the bottom is Winnipeg and Montreal. The average bill for many one living in Montreal is \$72 less. That's less than half of what people in Ottawa pay.

CHCH : Hydro Rate Cuts Expected to Benefit Ontario Businesses

Source: CHCH

Mar 2, 2017 6:37 PM (20)

Anchor: As we mentioned earlier the Liberals are planning to cut hydro rates which will benefit many households by putting cash in their pockets but the drop could aid another important group, businesses. Bloomberg TV Canada's Jamie Sturgeon joins us with more. How much of an impact will today's announcement have on businesses?

Jamie Sturgeon, Bloomberg TV Canada: Thanks, Taz. That 25 per cent drop in hydro rates, from the looks of it, once you factor in that sales tax cut isn't just a boon for consumers. There's countless small to medium-sized businesses out there who just got a dose of great news as well. This is also ultimately good for the province. Yes this does ratchet up the tax burden over the long term for sure, but the cut now means Ontario is a more attractive region to do business in. Several experts noting that today. This change makes the province more competitive with other jurisdictions now and will likely lead to better growth ahead and all that comes with that, like better job creation. So households will have some extra cash in their pockets or will see some cash returned to their pockets but the same now applies for businesses as well. All of which are economically beneficial here.

Anchor: Households are set to enjoy a cut in hydro but based on new economic numbers from Stats Can this morning, consumers entered 2017 on solid financial foot already. Can you explain that?

Sturgeon: Yeah, new GDP numbers for final few months of 2016 today show you another impressive performance for consumers here for sure and for once we are talking about this simply being a reflection or extension of this ongoing growth in household debt levels that we hear so much about. Economists noting today that this was actually backed by a pretty solid mix of employment growth and in turn rising incomes. Yeah, there are still many lingering questions over what happens to the housing markets and the wealth effect that is creating to support consumer spending in the province. Households are up against record debt levels, in an environment where interest rates seem almost certain to rise this year a little bit, but looking at numbers put out by Stats Can today, many economists saying the consumer outlook looks pretty sturdy here. Wage growth, savings rates. Those were up strongly in the fourth quarter as well. CIBC saying those gains are going to provide some cushion for consumer spending as you move through this year now.

Anchor: Thanks so much, Jamie. That's markets reporter Jamie Sturgeon.

CFPL : Province Announces Plan For 17 Percent Reduction In Hydro Bills

Source: CFPL

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor: Well, the provincial government officially announced its plan today that will see an average 17 percent reduction in your hydro bill. But it comes with a price tag of up to \$1.4 billion a year in extra interest costs and as Paul bliss tells us those extra costs will come due for taxpayers in the future.

Reporter: It's the largest hydro bill reduction in Ontario history. It may also determine whether the Kathleen Wynne government survives next year's election.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: For too long governments, my own included, have made mistakes in the way we have structured Ontario's electricity system. That has resulted in rates that are unfairly high. It's time to fix those mistakes in ways that work for today and for the future.

Reporter: The Premier says electricity is not a frill; it's an essential. So she plans to lower bills this year 25 percent for those in cities up to 53 percent in rural and northern Ontario. 135-dollar monthly bill will drop to \$101 starting June 1st and there are savings perform \$12 to \$75 a month for 800,000 customers from up 350,000 in rural areas.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Not just another short-term stop gap but something that's sound and sustainable.

Reporter: The Energy Minister says rural customers are getting added relief.

Minister Thibeault: Downtown Toronto, downtown Sudbury, downtown London you have 500 people on one pole. In the rural parts of our province you have 500 poles to get to one person. They have been paying a higher proportion on their distribution rate.

Reporter: Here is some of how prices are being cut for people: Electricity price increases will be held to the rate of inflation for four years. They will be stretching the global adjustment payment over 30 years, not 20, to ease short-term costs. This will add is \$.14 billion a year in interest costs.

MPP Todd Smith, PC Energy Critic: They are simply mortgaging our kids and our grandkids' future to the tune of \$172 billion to pay for their mistakes.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: It looks like we are talking in the tens of billions of dollars to buy down hydro rates in advance of the election.

Reporter: The opposition says it's a Hail Mary pass designed to get the Liberals re-elected; the Premier insisting it's about fairness, not political fortunes.

CFPL : London Residents and Businesses React To Hydro Announcement

Source: CFPL

Mar 2, 2017 6:02 PM (2)

Anchor: Reaction to the Liberal government's hydro announcement is pouring in from across the province. Our Natalie Quinlan gets reaction from a local business owner and a family.

Justin Gilpin, resident: That was probably one of the worst days of our lives.

Reporter: Just seven months ago a cooking accident claimed the family home of Justin Gilpin and Jaclyn Drouin.

Justin Gilpin, resident: It's definitely hard to get yourself back to where were you. We are still not there yet.

Reporter: Since then the husband and wife say finances have been especially tight, cite willing hydro as a specific sore spot with some bills climbing to over \$200 a month. A hefty price tag for the family of six.

Jaclyn Drouin, resident: Some days I have the option of either pay most of my bill or some of it or get

groceries.

Reporter: Just on the other end of the city Sutherland's furniture is sharing a similar story with hydro prices steadily rising over the last six years. And even after spending hundreds of thousands in hydro saving renovations and slashing store hours by 14 hours a week they are still paying more for less.

Gus Dupuis, Sutherland Furniture: To increase something by a hundred percent and then give an 8 or a 25 percent reduction isn't solving the problem. It's still 75 percent too high.

Reporter: Listening on, leader of the NDP party Andrea Horwath who aims to cut hydro costs by 30 percent, 5 percent more than the Liberals.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: This system is in a mess because of decisions made that have brought private interest in our electricity system.

Reporter: While the proposed 30 percent reduction won't absorb all financial bumps from the past, the Gilpin family says it's a hopeful start.

Justin Gilpin, resident: You should be able to do laundry any time of the day for any rate. And that's kind of frustrating.

CFPL : Interview with Premier Wynne On Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CFPL

Mar 2, 2017 6:19 PM (11)

Anchor: The provincial government officially announced its plan that will see an average 17 percent reduction in our hydro bills. For more on that we are joined now by Premier Kathleen Wynne. Thank you, premier Wynne, for taking the time. Now the first question: A lot of critics say this plan just means taxpayers will end up paying more in the long run. What is your response to that and do you think it's fair to ask future generations to carry these extra costs?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So Kelda, the fairness in this is that right now we have got people paying electricity bills that include costs of rebuilding a system that had been neglected for many years. And what we are saying is that if we spread those costs over a longer period of time - so rather than paying for the upgrades to the system that were absolutely necessary. Instead of paying for those over 20 years, we pay for those over 30 years, then we can provide a 25 percent reduction. You said 17 percent. You are absolutely right. 17 percent on top of the 8 percent that we had already taken out of people's bills by removing the HST, the provincial portion of the HST. So by summer on average people will see a 25 percent reduction because we are spreading those costs over a 30-year period and we will keep those costs down over the next four years.

Anchor: The NDP they have spoken about their plan that they say would reduce rates by as much as 30 percent for some households and I mean the centrepiece of that is buying back shares of Hydro One. What do you think of the plan that they have been promoting?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, what the NDP is talking about is not practical. And what we know right now, Kelda, is people need relief right now. They need immediate relief. They can't wait for a couple of years for a renegotiation and the other reality is that the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One has not put one cent of costs on anyone's electricity bills. So what we were looking for was a practical plan that would actually take people's costs down and that's what this will do. Spreading the costs of the investments in the system that had to be made, spreading those costs over a 30-year period, rather than a 20 year period - it's fair. It means that, yes, people today will continue to pay for some of those costs but also people into the next generation will pay some of those costs because the assets are still going to be in use. On top of that, people who are living in rural communities, who are paying a very high distribution cost are going to stay on top of the 25 percent reduction, they will see another 10 or 15 percent reduction - so they will see a substantial reduction in the distribution costs, which is lower in our urban centres than it is in our rural centres.

CBC : Premier Wynne Announces Additional Hydro Rate Cuts

Source: CBC

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Unidentified: How much are you paying right now?

Unidentified: \$54 a month

Unidentified: A couple of hundred bucks.

Unidentified: You have to make a choice at the end of the month and say do I have to get the bill paid in installments, do I have to put it over to the next payment.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: We are tripling the size of the cut we are making to people's hydro bills.

Unidentified: I'm glad to see it being done.

Unidentified: [Inaudible] saving more money.

Unidentified: I don't think it's a fix. This is simply a bit of a cover-up.

Unidentified: It's just a political ploy.

Premier Wynne: I don't expect a celebration as we make these announcements today.

Unidentified: Too little, too late.

Anchor: You'll save more money, but the big question tonight... will it be enough? Kathleen Wynne unveiled her plan to cut hydro costs in this province today. It will take effect this summer. So, what will it mean for your bill? Let's break down the numbers. The new cut will be 17 per cent on average, bringing the total cut this year to about 25 per cent per customer. So where are the savings coming from? That first 8 per cent was the provincial portion of the HST. That cut kicked in on January first. To make up the other 17 per cent, the province is refinancing part of its long-term plan to build new power plants and refurbish old ones. Think of it like refinancing your mortgage. Those costs will now be spread over 30 years. As you heard, reaction to the plan is pretty split. As we dig in deeper, feel free to chime in on Facebook. The show is live there right now, and we're awaiting for your comments. I want to bring in our Queen's Park reporter Mike Crawley. Mike - let's talk dollars and cents here. How much cash will people actually save?

Reporter: There'll be bigger dollar savings for people who consume more electricity, but let's look at the average customer. At the end of last year, their bill was about \$160 a month so with this discount, come the summer, their bill will be down to a \$120 a month.

Anchor: But there's always a catch, right?

Reporter: Yeah. A big catch. So the catch in this is, hydro customers are going to end up paying more down the road. So the government and the hydro industry, they can't even actually say exactly how much that is going to be. Once the bills drop this summer, they are promising that any increases are going to be kept below the rate of inflation for five years. After that, absolutely no guarantees.

Anchor: So the government isn't saying how much we're actually going to pay?

Reporter: So there are some estimates about the interest payments. You mentioned this is like refinancing your mortgage over a longer period of time, and you know when you do that, you're going to face some hefty interest payments. When you're talking about a bill this big. There's some huge numbers here. \$25 Billion in extra interest payments. That's what hydro customers are going to have to pay over the coming years, over the next 30 years and by that time it's going to be your own kids paying the hydro bill.

Anchor: And we know, the big question here for everyone, Mike, is this will be enough to save Kathleen Wynne's re-election hopes.

Reporter: Look. There are some people who wouldn't vote for Kathleen Wynne even if she gave them her hydro for free, but the Liberals are still hoping that this will be enough to kind of neutralize this as a really

hot political issue. That some of the heat off of the government.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I don't expect a celebration as we make these announcements today. People are struggling with electricity costs that are too much for their families to bear. So stretching the cost over 30 years, recognizing the distribution costs in some part of the province are too high, and recognizing that whatever fix we put in place has to last, has to be in place for a number of years. That's the help that we're putting in place for people.

Reporter: So these cuts will kick in this summer, about one year before the election.

CBC : Opposition Reaction to Hydro Bill Reduction Plan

Source: CBC

Mar 2, 2017 6:02 PM (2)

Anchor: Now the opposition parties were quick to give their opinions on this Liberal plan. The consensus. This is just about the price. It's not about the price. It's all about actually the politics.

Patrick Brown, Progressive Conservative Leader: I want to see a drop in hydro rate. I think anyone who pays a hydro bill wants to see it drop. I think the majority of people are going to be disappointed that this is just for show, this is temporary, this a bandage on a bullet wound.

Jagmeet Singh, NDP Deputy Leader: They're hoping to have a short term impact to actually give themselves a bump for the elections and that's a problem with what their policy is. It's not a long-term vision. It's not actually fixing the problem. It's a short term vision to get re-elected and people are going to see through that.

CBC : Interview with Premier Wynne on Hydro Bill Reduction Plan

Source: CBC

Mar 2, 2017 6:03 PM (3)

Anchor: I had a chance to speak to the Premier after today's announcement to ask her whether this was about Ontario's power or about who's in power in Ontario.

Anchor: The frustration over the high cost has been building for some time now. A lot of people are asking today if the urgency now, to deal with this issue is because we're coming up to an election next year. Can

you understand how voters might be skeptical?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Yeah. The timing. I hear you. It's a good question, but the fact is, that we've for some time been working to take costs out of the system. So for more than a year, we've been looking for ways to take costs out of the system so we renegotiated some big contracts, like the Samsung contract, you know. We put in place the Ontario Energy Support Program because we know that low income families need support and we took the 8 per cent off people's bills, but all of those things still weren't enough to help people who really needed support.

Anchor: Do you feel that your government staying in power may depend on fixing this electricity issue in our province and fixing these prices?

Premier Wynne: You're going to have to talk to the people of Ontario the day after the provincial election. I just can't make those kinds of predictions and I have to work every day to solve the problems and fix the issues that people are facing in the province and whether there's an election or not, those are the things that are my responsibility and as I said, this has been a concern for some time. It's a legitimate question to say why is it taking so long. We've been working on it. It is very complicated. I mean we looked at everything. We looked at all different options and this is what we've landed on and we're going to move as quickly as possible to make sure people see these reductions by summer.

CBC : Consumer Reaction to Hydro Bill Cuts

Source: CBC

Mar 2, 2017 6:05 PM (4)

Anchor: Let's bring in our Adrian Cheung now. Adrian, you've been gauging reaction to the rate reduction. What are you hearing from people on the street?

Reporter: Well, it's been a pretty mixed reaction. On the one hand, people of course they're happy that in the immediate term it will cost less, but many still have questions about the province about how we got to this point. We spoke to Susan Cozzi. She's like many Ontarians is worried about hydro bills. And she dug up her bills from February over the past several years to compare. What she found was that her bill has essentially doubled in a year.

Reporter: We're looking at double.

Susan Cozzi: Yes it's double.

Reporter: What do you make of the rising costs of your bill here?

Cozzi: It's just very shocking. It makes it harder and harder especially when you're on a pension, you're a senior to cover this cost. And I don't know why it's going up so quickly. Here it's for March 2016 and it's for two months and it's for the same period for a single month.

Reporter: Until you really sat down, and looked at the numbers, are you surprised that it's doubled, that the cost of just a year ago, two months usage is equal to one month. Does that surprise you seeing it now?

Cozzi: Yes. As I say, I wasn't really noticing. I just get my bills and pay them at the beginning of the month. It was only about three months ago that I thought didn't I have one of these last month, because you're doing telephone and several other bills at the same time. I thought, how did this happen? Why did it happen? Where's the money going? It's always been a surprise to me that the rates are -- seem to be highest during the day when seniors are home. We can't do anything. There are times when we have to turn on the electricity, and it seems unfair for us to be hit like that. And I also worry about families coming home to cook dinner, because the rate doesn't go down until 7, so it's the very highest rate when they're cooking dinner. This is gouging the population.

Reporter: She says in short term, she's happy bills will cost less, but she doesn't see this as a long-term sense.

Anchor: Did you get a sense from the people that you spoke to today that this announcement will help Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals now, especially looking forward to the next provincial election?

Reporter: Well, I should stress that I interviewed a relatively small sample size here, but nearly every person I spoke to told me the same thing. One, that they see this rate as a short-term solution. That the cost will have to be paid down the road. And two, this really does nothing for her political sport. Every person I spoke to said that this announcement did not swing their vote and that if the provincial election were tomorrow, they wouldn't vote for her. Dwight.

CKCO : Premier Announces Big Cuts To Hydro Bills

Source: CKCO

Mar 2, 2017 6:11 PM (5)

Anchor: This morning, the Premier made it official - big cuts are coming to the hydro bills. But critics say the cut are a political ploy that will cost you more in the long run. CTV's Abigail joins us now. Most people agree hydro rates are painfully high.

Reporter: Well, we have heard it loud and clear, especially from people in the rural areas of our coverage area. The government has heard it too. That's why these cuts are coming. Wynne calls them the biggest in Ontario's history.

Brian Siefried, hydro customer: I said funny Wynne didn't tell us that.

Reporter: Brian wasn't impressed to learn the 8 percent cut to his hydro bill was only for the pure power, not delivery charges or anything else.

Siefried: Figures lie and liars figure. That's an ament old statement but it sort of hits home when you see this type of thing.

Reporter: This morning's announcement by the Premier...

Premier Kathleen Wynne: We are tripling the size of the cut we're making to people's hydro bills from 8 percent to an average of 25 percent.

Reporter: Doesn't have Brian too excited

Siefried: It's just a grab, grab, grab all the time, and if they don't get it on the hydro bills, they will get it somewhere else.

Reporter: If you live in a city, this summer your bill will drop 25 percent up to 53 percent for those in rural and northern Ontario.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: It's time to fix those mistakes in ways that work for today and for the future.

Reporter: Wynne compares the financing to a mortgage and instead of paying it down in 20 years, she is stretching the payments out across 30 years, that will cost an extra \$1.4 billion dollars a year in interest.

MPP Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: It looks like we're talking in the billions of dollars to buy down hydro rates in advance of the election.

Reporter: Removing the delivery charge for on reserve First Nations customers and helping low-income customers will cost 2.5 billion over the next three years.

MPP Todd Smith: PC Finance Critic: This is a massive, massive hit to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Reporter: The Conservatives haven't offered an alternative plan yet, but the New Democrats have - one they say would cut costs up to 30 percent.

Getting rid of time of use, phasing out privatization, stopping the privatization of Hydro One. If the Premier isn't going to address those structural issues, she won't address the fundamental problems that are driving up rates.

Reporter: The NDP call it an expensive band-aid. The Premier maintains it is about fairness for all taxpayers. The new cuts will be implemented in June and when they are, Wynne promises to hold the rate to inflation for at least the next four years. Rosie.

CKCO : Interview with Premier Kathleen Wynne On Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CKCO

Mar 2, 2017 6:37 PM (20)

Anchor: Now to more on the provincial government's plan to cut hydro rates. With more on what this means for residents of Waterloo Region, we are joined by Premier Kathleen Wynne. Premier Kathleen Wynne, back in the fall, you admitted that your government made a mistake by letting rates soar. How did they get so high in the first place?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, the story of how rates have gotten so high, Rosie, actually goes back quite some time. It goes back to the reality that governments, year over year, - whether Liberal or NDP or Conservative really - over a period of 40 or 50 years did not make the investments that needed to be made. When we came into office under my predecessor in 2003, we had a system that was degraded; it was burning dirty coal. We have shutdown all the coal plant; we've made about \$50 billion in investment over the last decade or so but there is a cost associated with those upgrades. We have a clean electricity grid now but there is a cost that has to be paid. And what we're saying is that we need to spread that cost over a longer period of time. What is happening right now is that people are paying at a rate that would pay off those costs over a 20-year period. We're saying we need to spread that over a 30-year period, which will be fairer for people today and will mean that, yes, people into the next generation will pay for some of those assets as well, but they will be using those assets; they will be benefitting from the assets.

Anchor: When it comes to the plan, with he know that customers in rural areas will get a big break - a 53 per cent cut to their bills. How exactly would that work?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Depending on where people live and who their distribution company is, they will see a larger reduction on their costs. Because people who are living in rural communities and more remote communities are paying a disproportionately higher distribution cost, so what we have said is, you know what, that's not fair. They can't control that cost, so we're going to take those distribution costs down to the -- about what an urban customer would pay and that means people that are paying, within you know, twice electricity bill in rural communities, they will see those distribution cost go down. On top of the 25 per cent they may see another 15 or 20 per cent reduction.

Anchor: Some critics say you are just robbing Peter to pay Paul. What is your response to that?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: My response is if an asset is going to last for 30 years or longer, then it's fair

that people who are benefitting from that asset would pay their share over that period of time, over the life of asset, which is why stretching those payments over a 30-year period is fairer.

MCTV : Province Promises To Tackle Rising Electricity Prices

Source: MCTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor: Good evening. The Wynne Liberals promised to tackle rising electricity prices in the province and today they rolled out their hydro rate reduction plan. What kind of impact will the reduction have on your bill? CTV's Paul Bliss has our top story.

Reporter: It's an aggressive attack on Hydro bills and on her sagging popularity.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: For too long governments, my own included, have made mistakes in the way we've structured Ontario's electricity system. That has resulted in rates that are unfairly high.

Reporter: The Premier says she hears the cries for help so she's cutting electricity bills by substantial 25 per cent for people in cities, up to 53 per cent in rural and northern Ontario. An average bill of \$135 drops to \$101 starting June 1st. There's additional savings of \$12 to \$75 dollars a month for 800,000 rural customers, up from 350,000 homes facing very high delivery charges.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: Downtown Toronto, downtown Sudbury, downtown London, you have 500 people on one pole. In the rural parts of our province you have 500 poles to get to one person.

Reporter: So how can this be done out of the blue? Increases will be held to the rate of inflation for four years. The government will stretch those global adjustment payments for billions in recent energy contracts over 30 years instead 20 to ease the short-term costs. It's being compared to re-mortgaging a house, extending the payments over 30 years instead of just 20. The catch is: Ontarians will pay \$14 billion in interests over the decades. But this largest Hydro price reduction in Ontario history is throwing cold water on a hot issue the opposition had hoped to use against the Liberals in the next election.

Todd Smith, PC Energy Critic: They're simply mortgaging our kids and grandkids' future to the tune of \$172 billion pay for their mistakes.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: Sometime over the next 5 to 10 years we'll be dealing with the higher costs that will come from the debt that's being incurred now to allow this government to get through an election.

Reporter: The Premier insists it's not about getting re-elected, it's about being fair to the people.

MCTV : Interview with Premier Wynne On Hydro Rate Relief Plan

Source: MCTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:42 PM (25)

Anchor: Returning to our top story, hydro rates are coming down but Ontario residents will pay for it later. The Wynne government is cutting rates by another 17 percent. You should start to feel the difference this summer. The Premier says the rate cut will help every person in Ontario, but cutting rates now will cost more in the long-run. Taking longer to pay for all the power lines, power plants and green energy will cost Ontarians an extra \$14 billion over 30 years. Premier, herself Kathleen Wynne joins us now. Premier, opposition MPPs have been standing up in the legislature telling stories about people here in northern Ontario who are struggling with their hydro bills, doing everything the Ontario government told them to do - do their laundry at night, conserve and yet their bill skyrocketed. Is today's hydro rate cut an admission that your energy policy failed Ontarians?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, Tony, what we did today was we acknowledged that people are overburdened by their electricity bills and that the changes that we have made, the latest of which was the 8 per cent reduction, taking the HST off people's bills, is just not enough. That there's more that we need to do. We've been looking for some months for ways of reducing people's costs and today we announced a 25 percent reduction in people's electricity bills. An average across the province. On average residents who pay electricity will see a 25 percent reduction. We also announced - and this is really relative for the north and the rural communities, people paying very high distribution costs - we're going to bring those distribution costs down to the level that a resident in an urban area like Toronto would pay. People paying high distribution cost on top of the 25 percent are going to see another 10 to 15 percent reduction. It's going to be a significant reduction for people who are quite frankly paying too much for their electricity bills.

Anchor: Premier, your critics are questioning the timing of this move. There's an election next year and your Liberals are not doing well in the polls. Is this rate cut about buying votes?

Premier Kathleen Wynne: As I've been saying, Tony, we've been looking for ways to reduce people's electricity costs for time. What is driving this change is all voices that I've heard, that my colleagues have heard, that MPPs of all stripes have heard. And, you know, the opposition parties have been standing up in the legislature saying that they're hearing that people's electricity bills are too high. Exactly, the same message that I heard. What's driving these changes are those voices. The people who are having double paying for their electricity bills. They're feeling like they can't pay their rent, their mortgage or they can't look after their kids adequately because their electricity bills are too high. That's what is driving this. This isn't about election timing. This is about the timing of families who need to have some relief. We're delivering that relief by the summer. On average, people will see a 25 percent reduction in their electricity bills and it will be more in the rural and the northern communities.

Anchor: Thanks for this, Premier Wynne.

Anchor: Thanks very much, Tony, take care.

MCTV : FONOM Statement On Hydro Rate Cuts

Source: MCTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:46 PM (26)

Anchor: And the President of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, Alan Spacek, had this to say about today's hydro rate cut:

Alan Spacek, FONOM: We are pleased that electricity ratepayers will see the positive benefits of this announcement in the near future and for the commitment that rates will not increase beyond the rate of inflation for the next four years.

MCTV : Interview with Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault On Hydro Relief

Source: MCTV

Mar 2, 2017 6:46 PM (29)

Anchor: Now the Energy Minister and Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault is live in our studio. Mr. Thibeault, we've already covered the nuts and bolts of the hydro rate cut. So tell us personally, you know, what is this announcement mean for you? It's a big ordeal.

Minister Thibeault: It is a big ordeal. And, you know, I'm always happy to be able to hear from residents, you know, especially here in Sudbury, especially as the MPP for Sudbury because that is the hat that I wear most often. When I'm at Tim Hortons, wherever I am in the community, when I have a senior say, Glenn, it would be great if you could help us with electricity because we are seeing some of the rates go up. That rings true to me, right? So with we were able to do today was, you know, bring forward some significant rate reductions to help these families. Because ultimately when you get into politics, what you want to do is actually help people, right? So no matter if people agree or disagree with your policy, you're ultimately, every party, is looking at trying to find ways that we can help and I think today shows that.

Anchor: Speaking of politics, you switched from federal politics to provincial politics. You were elected in Sudbury and you became the Energy Minister. A lot of people would say that's a career killer. How has that been on you?

Minister Thibeault: You know, it's a tough portfolio - no ifs, ands or buts about it. It's challenging but I got into politics to do something; not to be something. So, you know, if you're looking at the energy portfolio, it's one that - I know the Premier said this - but it's one that all political parties of all political stripes, Conservatives, New Democrats, and the Liberals have never worked on the way they should have. We saw that back in 2003. It kind of came to a head when we had the blackout and the rolling brownouts. So we had to rebuild that entire system. I'm actually, you know, enjoying the portfolio, if you can believe that because we are seeing an opportunity to make a difference. Today with, you know, bringing our system

and making it more affordable, that's great. But we've now got a clean system, a reliable system, and one that we can count on. So I'm happy to see that. And I'm really pleased with today's rate mitigation that is actually a fair hydro plan, making this the biggest reduction in electricity rates in our province's history.

Anchor: Mr. Thibeault, we have less than 30 seconds. A lot of people are saying this is the Liberals' way of buying votes. Your party's view?

Minister Thibeault: In my opinion, it's never too late to do the right thing. You know what? Today is doing the right thing. We tried other, you know, reductions that haven't - were more, you know, targeted or source target and that didn't give the result that we would like. Today a significant reduction and a fair hydro plan will help everyone in the province.

Anchor: Thanks very much for coming on live tonight. Sudbury MPP and Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault. I know it's been a crazy, busy day, so thank you very much for your time.

Minister Thibeault: I'm happy to be here.

Anchor: Thanks very much.

CKVR : Provincial Government Unveils New Hydro Rate Reduction

Source: CKVR

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor: Save now, but pay later. A slew of complaints about hydro bills prompted Premier to announce new plan today to cut rates by additional 17 percent. She compared to refinancing a mortgage and she made another promise to us affecting some rural customers in our region. We'll hear that when we speak with the Premier in a moment, but first, CTV's Paul Bliss explains the new rate cut that everyone is supposed to see by summer.

Reporter: It's an aggressive attack on Hydro bills and on her sagging popularity.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: For too long governments, my own included, have made mistakes in the way we've structured Ontario's electricity system. That has resulted in rates that are unfairly high.

Reporter: She says she hears the cries for help so she's cutting electricity bills by substantial 25 per cent for people in cities, up to 53 per cent in rural and northern Ontario. An average bill of \$135 drops to \$101 starting June 1st. There's additional savings for 800,000 rural customers up from 350,000 homes facing very high delivery charges.

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy: Downtown Toronto, downtown Sudbury, downtown London, you have 500 people on one pole. In the rural parts of our province you have 500 poles to get to one person.

Reporter: So how can this be done out of the blue? Increases will be held to the rate of inflation for four years. The government will stretch those global adjustment payments for billions in recent energy contracts over 30 years instead of 20 to ease the short-term costs. It's being compared to re-mortgaging a house, extending the payments over 30 years instead of just 20. The catch is, Ontarians will pay \$14 billion in interests over the decades. But this largest hydro price reduction in history is throwing cold water on a hot issue the opposition had hoped to use against the Liberals in the next election.

Todd Smith, PC MPP: They're simply mortgaging our kids and grandkids' future to the tune of \$172 billion pay for their mistakes.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: Sometime over the next 5 to 10 years we'll be dealing with the higher costs that will come from the debt that's being incurred now to allow this government to get through an election.

Reporter: The Premier insists it's not about getting re-elected, it's about being fair to the people. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

CKVR : Interview with Premier Wynne on Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CKVR

Mar 2, 2017 6:02 PM (2)

Anchor: Joining us to discuss the plan further is Premier Kathleen Wynne. Premier thank for making some time for us today.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Great Tony thanks very much for having me.

Anchor: You acknowledged how difficult a situation customers have been in, I have to ask you, how do you feel about putting all of that extra debt on Ontario taxpayers?

Premier Wynne: Well, here is thing Tony, we um, we've made a lot of investments in a system that was pretty degraded when we come to office under my predecessor in 2003, we had brown outs and black outs, the system had been neglected and that's not a partisan comment. It was Liberal and NDP and Conservative governments who had not made the upgrades that needed to be made. We have done that. We have invested about \$50 billion in new dams, and towers, and power lines and renewable energy, wind and solar and so we have a clean, renewable grid. We have shut down the coal fired plant, we're not having smog days so we have made a lot of changes but there is cost associated with that. And so what

we're doing is spreading the cost, spreading the payment for those investments over a longer period of time. Rather than 20 years, we're spreading that cost over 30 years. So I think that's fair. I think that it is fair. I think that it's fair to ask yes this generation to pay for part of that but also to ask next generation to pay for assets that they're going to be using and benefitting from as well.

Anchor: Is this the only option you had to cut electricity bills?

Premier Wynne: We looked at everything Tony. We looked at all options. We looked at the contracts that were in place. We looked at ways to help people, but we're doing other things too. We're going to be changing the distribution costs especially for people who live in areas where the distribution costs are very high and so people for example who are served by InnPower are going to see their distribution costs go down because they're disproportionately higher than people who live in urban centres and so we've said that's not fair, because those are costs that people can't control so we're going to reduce those distribution costs to about what someone would pay in a more dense urban centre.

Anchor: So the government does have some power with that delivery charge? That is one of biggest things we hear people complain about.

Premier Wynne: Well, so here the thing, what we have said that we're going take those very high distribution costs and take part on to the tax base rather than asking rate payers to pay for that. Likewise with the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which is a program to help people who live in low income, we're going to take that program which is really a social program and we're going to put it on tax base and off bills because it is only fair that it be shared by all of the society.

Anchor: Okay everyone will be watching their bills by summer for those cuts.

Premier Wynne: By summer people will see those costs reduced on to their electricity bills okay?

Anchor: Premier Wynne thanks for your time.

Premier Wynne: Thanks Tony.

CKVR : Local Reaction Government's Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CKVR

Mar 2, 2017 6:20 PM (14)

Anchor: Back to our top story now, the hydro rate cut announced today by Premier Wynne. We have heard from many people in our region who are dealing with high bills and from agencies helping the people who can't pay them. Live to CTV's Brandon Gonez, now for more.

Reporter: Yes Tony. We hit the streets to talk with residents and business owners and organizations that have all been feeling the effects of soaring hydro bills and today, many while many people in our region are happy to see reduced hydro bills on the way, for some people it's come a little too late. It was back in January we met Lawrence Vindum Barrie butcher who was struggling with his hydro bills.

Lawrence Vindum, The Butcher Shop Owner: I had chest pains when I opened up the bill and I couldn't sleep for a few days while I tried to scrape together the money to pay it.

Reporter: Today he says the government's plan to chop another 17 per cent isn't a lasting solution.

Vindum: It is helpful but it is not enough. I don't think it deals with root cause of the problem. I think this is just a bandaid.

Reporter: The rate cut is welcome news the United Way of Simcoe-Muskoka.

Dale Biddell, United Way, Simcoe-Muskoka: There are couple measures that we see are going to improve at least the cost of utilities.

Reporter: The charity administers two programs that provide emergency money to residents who are at risk of having their hydro cut off. One of them is Low Income Energy Assistance Program where demand has soared.

Biddell: We have received over 4,500 applications since January and as I say, 1,500 have been approved and 500 more are pending.

Reporter: The other is an emergency program for people who use electricity as their main source of heat. They hope hydro bills will force fewer people to rely on the programs and put less pressure on their bottom line.

Biddell: We never have funds available at end of year.

Reporter: While some people admit the cut will help --

Unidentified: Better than nothing.

Reporter: Others say it is all about politics.

Unidentified: They created the problem. Starting now to, they're trying to fix it, so they get re-elected, well they're not going to get re-elected.

Reporter: Many people also said they're going to wait until they open their hydro bills to see exactly what the savings amount to before make up their minds how they feel. Reporting live, I'm Brandon Gonez.

CKWS : Premier Wynne Announces Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CKWS

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor 1: Hydro customers will be getting a long-awaited break on their bills. In the face of a growing public backlash, Premier Kathleen Wynne announcing that electricity prices will be cut by around 25 per cent.

Anchor 2: Your monthly bills will start to fall this summer as the government tries to short-circuit voter discontent, but as Sean O'Shea reports, the hydro reduction comes with a big cost.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: So we are here today.

Reporter: Premier Kathleen Wynne about to admit her own government is to blame.

Premier Wynne: We have made mistakes in the way we structured Ontario's electricity system.

Reporter: That refurbishing that system should have been done differently.

Premier Wynne: But the way we finance those investments was a mistake.

Reporter: And with the price of electric power ballooning, that's about to change for consumers.

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy: The largest reduction in electricity rates in our province's history, because we know families need help now.

Reporter: Beginning in June, the government says, your bill will go down.

Premier Wynne: Our plan will lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential consumers in the province.

Reporter: Rural customers, the hardest hit of all, could see cuts of up to 51 per cent, that cut paid for by putting off the repayment of debt, by financing the cost of hydro generation over a 30-year window.

Premier Wynne: So re-mortgaging the system, in effect, is a much fairer way of approaching this.

Reporter: But the Liberals' critics say it's unfair for future generations who'll be saddled with higher debt.

Patrick Brown, PC Leader: I'm happy that there will be hydro relief. We believe hydro relief is necessary. What I'm concerned about is that the government is not addressing some of the structural problems.

Peter Tabuns, NDP MPP: She's put a very large band-aid on this problem, a very expensive band-aid, but she hasn't dealt with the structural issues. She hasn't even talked about them.

Reporter: Like higher costs for wind and solar power and long-term energy contracts responsible for much of that growing debt.

Jagmeet Singh, Deputy NDP Leader: It makes no sense. What they're doing is doubling down on a bad plan. They're not addressing the root problems of why we're in this position.

Reporter: Under mounting political pressure, the Liberals are hoping consumers will focus on a lower bill and not the cost years from now.

Tom Adams, Energy Consultant: Ontario has lost the kind of political wherewithal to pay its power bills as they come due. And so we've just decided to kick it down the road.

Reporter: Interest rates on the plan to pay off Ontario's hydro debt over time could cost an extra \$14 billion.

CKWS : Kingston Area Residents React to Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CKWS

Mar 2, 2017 6:03 PM (2)

Anchor: In this region, residents have made their voices heard over the rising cost of electricity in Ontario, staging several protests to the province that enough is enough. As Paul Soucy found out today, local hydro customers are pleased to finally see something being done but say it might be too little, too late.

Reporter: Hydro rates have been all the talk at water coolers and coffee shops for a while, and now something new to talk about. After a reduction of 8 per cent on hydro bills late last year, Kathleen Wynne announced another 17 per cent reduction that will begin this summer. The move is being touted by this Queen's University Political Expert as an early campaign move from Ontario's Premier.

Christo Aivalis, Queen's University, Political Expert: If she can lower hydro rates by 25 per cent, why hasn't she already lowered hydro rates by 25 per cent? It's like if that's an option politically, then why hasn't that been considered yet?"

Reporter: Local MPP, Liberal Sophie Kiwala says she doesn't buy into talk that the move was politically motivated.

Sophie Kiwala, Liberal MPP: I'm not seeing this through a political lens. I'm looking at this as the right and responsible thing to do."

Reporter: Rural residents have been hardest hit by rising electricity costs, specifically from elevated delivery charges. They're ecstatic to learn of the Premier's promise, but say this move alone isn't enough for the Liberals to regain their trust.

Unidentified: It kind of makes you wonder, right? Where was this years ago – it might have helped people save their homes.

Unidentified: Too much damage has been done. She's made a reputation for herself. So if people vote for her again they're just asking for more of the same I would think.

Unidentified: She's probably come to the realization that if she doesn't do something, she's going to be gone the next election. I think actually at this point in time, people won't forget.

Reporter: The opposition energy critic agrees. Saying hydro bills might go down over the short term, but this latest move is simply delaying the inevitable.

Todd Smith, PC MPP: That's the thing that we need to drive home. The government hasn't realized how and why they've made the mistakes that they have. They're just making us pay over a longer period of time.

Reporter: Smith calls the energy plan a desperate move by a desperate Premier, and that instead of dealing with root cause of the problem, they're simply extending the mortgage on billions of dollars worth of debt which will create a bigger problem further down the road.

CKPR : Premier Unveils Hydro Cost Reduction Plan

Source: CKPR

Mar 2, 2017 6:00 PM (1)

Anchor: Ontario's Liberal government unveiled a plan today that will see an average 17 per cent reduction in electricity bills but it will come with a price tag of up to \$1.4 billion \$1.4 billion a year in extra interest costs, extra costs that will ultimately come due for ratepayers In the future. Paul Bliss explains.

Reporter: It's the largest hydro bill reduction in Ontario history. It may also determine whether the Kathleen Wynne government survives next year's election.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: For too long, governments, my own included, have made mistakes in the way we've structured Ontario's electricity system. That has resulted in rates that are unfairly high. It's time to fix those mistakes in ways that work for today and for the future.

Reporter: The Premier says electricity is not a frill, it's an essential. So she plans to lower bills this year: 25 per cent for those in cities, up to 53 per cent in rural and northern Ontario. \$135 monthly bill will drop to \$101, starting June 1st. And there's savings of \$12 to \$75 a month for 800,000 customers, up from 350,000 in rural areas.

Premier Wynne: Not just another short-term stopgap, but something that's sound and sustainable.

Reporter: The Energy Minister says rural customers are getting added relief

Glenn Thibeault, Energy Minister: Downtown Toronto, downtown Sudbury, downtown London, you have 500 people on one pole. In the rural parts of our province, you have 500 poles to get to one person. They have been paying a higher proportion on their distribution rate.

Reporter: Here's some of how prices are being cut for people. Electricity price increases will be held to the rate of inflation for four years. They will be stretching the global adjustment payments over 30 years not 20, to ease short-term costs. This will add \$1.4 billion a year in interest costs.

Todd Smith, PC Energy Critic: They are simply mortgaging our kids' and our grandkids' future to the tune of \$172 billion to pay for their mistakes.

Peter Tabuns, NDP Energy Critic: It looks like we're talking tens of billions of dollars to buy down hydro rates, in advance of the election.

Reporter: The Opposition says it's a Hail Mary pass designed to get the Liberals re-elected. The Premier insisting it's about fairness, not political fortunes.

CKPR : Thunder Bay Hydro CEO Cautiously Optimistic About Province's Hydro Bill Reduction Plan

Source: CKPR

Mar 2, 2017 6:03 PM (2)

Anchor: Today's announcement by the province is being met by cautious optimism by the president of Thunder Bay Hydro. Robert Mace says they're still looking at details in the price reductions presented by the government today. Mace says there won't be a big impact on Thunder Bay Hydro itself, but the global adjustment cost that the province passes to the utility and the utility then in turn passes onto customers will be reduced. That reduction will come into effect on May 1 and Mace acknowledges that it will come at a cost to hydro users in the long run.

Robert Mace, Thunder Bay Hydro rates have been an issue for quite a while and obviously customers are very concerned. So it appears that the government addressed it. They're reducing hydro rates. It does appear that there's long term costs to this. So it appears what they're doing is taking costs and instead of charging them to customers now, spreading them out in the future. So there's always a trade-off when you're looking at that kind of thing, but clearly customers at least in the short-term. I would imagine are going to be happy with this.

Anchor: Mace say there are a number of questions that need to be addressed in regard to hydro pricing regulations and the legislation behind the province's plan.

CBCNN : Power & Politics: Interview With Patrick Brown About New Hydro Cuts

Source: CBCNN

Mar 2, 2017 5:14 PM

Premier Kathleen Wynne: Everywhere I go, I hear from people worried about the price that they're asked to pay for Hydro and the impact it has on their household budgets. There will be no asterisks, no loopholes and no exceptions. Our plan will lower electricity bills for all residential consumers in the province.

Rosemary Barton, Host: Well it's been a major political issue in Ontario for well over a year now. The ballooning cost of Hydro. For months homeowners have compared bills, posted distressed letters and videos online. Decried the provincial government for not taking action to reduce fees. Today, the Premier responded. Kathleen Wynne announced a 25 per cent cut to Hydro bills and rates will be capped at the

rate of inflation for the next four years, but there's a catch. It will cost taxpayers billions in extra interest payments. Is this the best solution and was it a genuine move, or a ploy to just try to win back votes ahead of next year's election? Patrick Brown is the leader of the Ontario PC Party. He joins us from Queen's Park. So, Mr. Brown, let's start with your reaction. What do you make of their plan to reduce Hydro bills?

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: I'm glad there's going to be, finally, some relief. I've listened to the Liberals for the last number of years say that everything is fine in Ontario. It isn't. People are facing real hardship. My concern, this is a bandage on a bullet hole. They're going to pay \$14 billion in interest to offer some temporary relief, but they're not looking at the structural issues. It's one thing to borrow to pay for past mistakes, but what I'm concerned about: all these bad contracts, they're not looking at any of them and they're continuing to sign new ones like (inaudible). All these new contracts are coming to the next stage tomorrow and the government is going full steam ahead so, in what world are they saying we're sorry for messing this up. We're going to borrow money to pay for it but we're going to commit the same mistakes tomorrow.

Rosemary: I know that the government did say at one point that this was to make sure future generations weren't hurt by this going down the line. But do you have the same interpretation because it does seem like they're going to do this now, but there will be consequences to this decision as well.

Patrick Brown: \$14 billion worth of consequences. \$14 billion worth of more interest we're going to pay to make up for these mistakes. Kathleen Wynne said six times in her press conference this morning, "we made mistakes. we made mistakes." I get that. I'm glad that there's a little bit of contrition. But what I want to see is a change of policy. And when we have all this surplus generation, all these bad contracts, when we're spilling onto our water power - we've got all this water power that we don't use in Ontario. We spill every day because we've signed 20-year deals for energy we do not need and despite government recognizing they've made a mistake, they're still going ahead tomorrow, even tomorrow, with new contracts. LRP1 still going full steam ahead when we don't need it.

Rosemary: What is the solution then? Because the issue for consumers has to be addressed. They can't continue to pay rates this high. How do you fix, and it fix it in the short term because it does have to be dealt with quickly.

Patrick Brown: So Rosemary, the first thing I would do is cancel the Green Energy Act. I would look at all the existing contracts, and the reason this is important in Ontario, it used to be a provincial benefit that from our sales of electricity we would actually have... we would make your bill cheaper. Under the Liberals, it became a global adjustment, and the global adjustment is this massive cost, it's the elephant in the room. It's a huge part of the bill. It's not the cost of electricity, it's actually the global adjustment that is killing people. And the global adjustment's filled with covering these bad contracts, and so no solution's going to be obtained unless we look at these bad contracts, and unless we stop signing these new ones. So two things: I'm going to look at the bad contracts, I'm going to review LRP1, and I'm going to stop signing new ones.

Rosemary: But that means ditching the green part of the plan, which is obviously where the Liberals want to get. I know you're committed to carbon pricing as well, so how do you move forward with the green plan if you ditch that idea?

Patrick Brown: It shouldn't even be called the Green Energy Act. Why do they call it the Green Energy Act? Water power is green. We spill energy every day in Ontario because we've signed 20 year deals with companies for energy we don't need. This is not about green energy, these are bad deals. And by the way, Rosemary, the Liberal party, according to Elections Ontario, for these 30 bad contracts, took in \$1.3

million in donations. I've asked Kathleen Wynne to return that \$1.3 million. It's unacceptable. They've made Ontario a laughingstock of energy policy. I know right now today there's damage control, and they're all going to applaud each other trying to fix this. They're fixing - they're attempting to fix this mess they created and they're not even doing that.

Rosemary: What do you make of the timing? Why it's happening now.

Patrick Brown: The only reason it's happening is they're in trouble. This is about their own political survival. If Kathleen Wynne was doing somewhat OK in the polls, they wouldn't be eating their own words. The last several years, they've said everything is fine. They tried to insist, even a few months ago, that we have low Hydro rates in Ontario. They are dead wrong. They made a mess of this, they need to own it, they're in full damage control, and that's why I think they've come up with this.

Rosemary: Okay, Patrick Brown, always good to see you. Thank you for your time.

Patrick Brown: My pleasure.

CBCNN : Power & Politics: Interview With Minister Brad Duguid About New Hydro Cuts

Source: CBCNN

Mar 2, 2017 5:19 PM

Rosemary Barton, Host: The rise in Hydro prices, in case you don't live in Ontario, has been steep. The average bill in 2005 was \$91. That shot up to \$156 last year. How does the government now plan to pay for this year's dramatic cuts and does it ignore the underlying problem? Brad Duguid is Ontario's Minister of Economic Development and Growth, and he also joins us from Queen's Park in Toronto. Nice to see you, Minister.

Brad Duguid, Minister of Economic Development and Growth: Rosemary, good to see you as well.

Rosemary: There have been a lot of complaints about Hydro for a long time. Why did it take so long get to today?

Minister Brad Duguid: We've been working on this for a long time as well. We had to make some very important investments to upgrade our system, in fact, we've replaced 80 per cent of our electricity system. At the same time, we wanted to get off of coal, so those were big, challenging investments. We've tried to help consumers on it with a number of initiatives, but what we found was that we still hadn't hit the mark. There was still more work to be done, so today, the Premier moved very boldly with the 25 per cent off Hydro rates, which I think consumers are going to welcome very much.

Rosemary: I'm sure they will in the short term, but I'm not quite clear on how it solves the long-term problem. Aren't you bushing this cost down the road?

Minister Brad Duguid: Well, in some ways, we're smoothing out the costs. But what we're doing is saying to this generation of consumers, who frankly have had a lot of on our shoulders. We've had to renew our entire energy system. We've had to replace coal, so that we build a clean system with cleaner air, and healthier outcomes for our people. There was a cost associated with that. So it's not really fair to have this generation pay the entire cost when these investments are going to last for 30 or 40 years. When it does it smooths out the investments over to the 30 or 40 years, which I think is a fairer way to restructure our energy system.

Rosemary: Well, it might have been a fairer way, but it would have been nice if the government thought of that before.

Minister Brad Duguid: Well, you know, the key is we've listened very carefully to what Ontarians have told us. We have tried with a number of initiative. We had a Clean Energy Benefit that took 10 per cent off the bill for a period of time. In January there was 8 per cent coming off the bill to help consumers. But what Ontarians told us, is thanks for that, that's helpful but still not enough. We need to do more. That's why the Premier moved so boldly today, to address the problem and by restructuring the way we do this so it's a permanent fix.

Rosemary: Patrick Brown says, part of the problem, other than not being able to see how this would unfold, is the bad energy. The green energy contracts that you have done nothing to address today. Why are you not going to overhaul that as well?

Minister Brad Duguid: Well what Patrick Brown wants to do is to simply rip up those contracts. That could come with about a \$26 billion dollar bill. If we were to do that, that would be irresponsible. Certainly, not the way we're going to do this. What we've done, it's a very responsible way to do this, and it's very transparent. It is as you described. It smooths out the cost over a longer amount of time, and what it does is ensure that this generation alone is not stuck with those initial very important investments that we've made to build a strong and reliable and clean energy system in Ontario.

Rosemary: I get that, but again, I would assume that a government would be signing contracts that would benefit taxpayers, and you're saying cancelling the contracts would come at a cost. He's saying that the contracts don't make any sense.

Minister Brad Duguid: You've got to remember when we started getting rid of coal, and replacing coal with a number of our renewables, the price of renewables was higher at the time because we were pioneers. We're the first jurisdiction in the world to be able to get off of coal. That means cleaner air and healthier outcomes for our kids. It's an important thing to do. But as time has gone by, the cost of renewables has gone down which has enabled us to enter into fairer and fairer contracts. We have lowered the cost of those contracts. But at the same time, to just rip up contracts that are in place right now as Patrick brown wants to do. A politician with absolutely no plan to go forward on energy whatsoever except rip up contracts, that's going to cost rate payers \$26 billion. Totally irresponsible.

Rosemary: But your plan is going to cost people money as well. I mean you just admitted that, it's just going to be pushed down the line to someone else's kids.

Minister Brad Duguid: We've been very transparent on that. Absolutely, there's no question. When you stretch out the period of time that you're going to be paying for an asset, there is more interest you're going to pay on that asset. But we think it's a cost worth paying because we've heard what Ontarians have said, and what our businesses have said. The burden on them, in this generation, is too much for them to handle, at this time, and it's only fair to pay for these assets over 40 years instead of 20.

Rosemary: Is this really just about getting votes in the next election? You can't go into an election with people paying these kinds of Hydro rates.

Minister Brad Duguid: It's not like this is the first time we've tried to fix this problem as a government. We've taken a number of initiatives along the way, including reducing costs by billions of dollars within the system. What we found though is the measures we've taken simply we're not enough, so today, we felt we needed to move boldly, and the Premier has done that. And it's going to benefit all Ontarians because all Ontarians will see their energy bills drop by 25 per cent.

Rosemary: I'll end on this. Would you at least concede that the reason you've had to do this today is because you've made a mistake in the past?

Minister Brad Duguid: I would say that, as a former Minister of Energy, all three parties through generations have made mistakes in our energy system. I would say though that we've been well intended, and what we tried to do is rebuild a system that was in tatters and we now have a clean, reliable energy system that we'll be proud to pass on to the next generation. It did come at a cost, and what we're doing now is smoothing out the impact of that cost on this generation. I think it's a fairer way to do it.

Rosemary: Okay, Minister, thank you for making the time on a busy day. I appreciate it.

Minister Brad Duguid: It's great to join you. It's a good day for Ontario.

Power Play : Panel Discussion On Premier Wynne's Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Source: CTVNN

Mar 2, 2017 5:26 PM (4)

Don Martin, Host: Welcome back. Well, with her popularity in a free fall and an election just over one year away, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne threw the breakers on a steep power rate cut in a desperate bid to avoid future shock. Here's Kathleen Wynne.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: We are tripling the size of the cut we're making to people's hydro bills, from 8 per cent to an average of 25 per cent.

Don: All right. Let's call in the Ontario panel who are ready to cover all the waterfront on this high-voltage issue. Sheamus Murphy is of Counsel Public Affairs. He leans towards Liberal sympathies. Joining us from Toronto, Will Stewart of Navigator Ltd., has deep Conservative connections. And Tom Parkin is an NDP strategist. All right, gentlemen, the polls for the current government are in a shocking state. So I guess Kathleen Wynne has made the ultimate power play. I guess I'll go to you first, Seamus. Is this going to work?

Sheamus Murphy, Counsel Public Affairs: Well, Don, you know, there's an old saying in politics that winning the fifth mandate is the hardest but I think for Premier Wynne, this is her leadership at work. She spoke to Ontarians. She heard from them about this issue and today before making this announcement called a number of people who had written to her about hydro rates to tell them what she was going to do. And I was surprised at the size of the announcement – 25 per cent reduction across the board is really significant, 40 to 50 per cent for some of those are who are the hardest hit. And how did she do it? By amortizing the cost of energy infrastructure from instead of 20 years, over 30 years, and by shifting social programs for some of the hardest-hit Ontarians off of the hydro rate base on to the tax base. How can they do that? Because they're going to have a balanced budget in the spring. So you know I think, is this – hopefully it will take the issue of hydro rates off the table. But I think that the Premier did this because it was the right thing to do.

Don: Okay Will, will this take the issue of power rates off the table?

Will Stewart, Navigator Ltd: No, of course not. And you know, I think I will agree with one thing that Sheamus said, that this is Kathleen Wynne's leadership – I'd say lack of leadership – at work. This is yet another attempt to put a band-aid on a massive hemorrhage of a problem of their own making. First off, the podium sign that says 25 per cent reduction in key message reported by Sheamus here right from the Premier's Office on your show – it's not 25 per cent, it's 17 per cent and that's on top of the 10 per cent that they oh, put back on your bills last time. This change today does nothing but add more cost to the tax base and more cost to future generations. I have a 10-year-old son. He will be my age when we finish paying for Kathleen Wynne's announcement today.

Don: All right, Tom. The NDP tried to get ahead of this curve. They had their own plan rolled out I think about a week ago. Do you think the NDP has any choice but to support this situation?

Tom Park, Political Commentator: No, this is unsupportable. The NDP plan actually tried to attack some of the underlying costs of hydro. It talked about the overbuild and supply. It addressed the incredibly lucrative windfall contracts to private energy suppliers and it addressed some of the core issues that are driving the cost of electricity in Ontario. The Liberal plan fixes nothing. It just extends the debt into the future. It makes bankers very happy. But unfortunately for Will, his party doesn't have a plan for anything. The NDP is proposing a plan that is trying to fix the system. So I think there's a good debate that's going to be coming now, whether simply pushing costs into the future is sufficient to make people happy or whether people really want somebody to attack the driving costs in the system.

Don: You know, Sheamus, this thing has been developing over years. This is has not just popped out in the last six months. Why on Earth do they wait so long to provide this relief? We've seen people – women have confronted Kathleen Wynne, they've gone to her and said look, this was my bill then, look at it now. This looks like pretty bland opportunism more than anything else.

Sheamus Murphy: Well, in fact, it goes back even further than that. Dalton McGuinty inherited a province

that had not had any significant energy investment since 1980, and that's under previous Liberal, NDP and Conservative governments. Phase out coal, introduced renewables and did blackouts and brownouts, but there were some issues with the system that was put in place, and that was that the costs were amortized over too short a period of time, and that the attempt to help with the energy costs for people from low-income communities or from rural and remote communities was also born by the Hydro rate base and those are issues that Kathleen Wynne has fixed. You know, just past the halfway point of her mandate. I think she listened and has come forward with a sweeping set of changes to address this problem.

Don: Will, I guess I have to ask you. Tom has got a point here. The Conservatives haven't rolled out their version of how they would try to provide power rate relief. What is your answer to that?

Will Stewart: I think it's a fair point. If you look back over the history of political election campaigns, certainly over the last three or four in Ontario, the Liberal government has seen what the Conservatives have come up with, copied it and tried to demonize them through paid advertising that they use for -- that they get money for from cash-for-access fundraisers. I think Patrick Brown is right to keep his powder dry. He's got a plan for this. He'll be rolling it out in a systematic way. You look at Sheamus, and what he had to say, and I was betting Tom before we came on the air how long it would be before he mentioned previous Conservative governments. I think people need to realize that's a little bit stale now after this government has been in power for 14 years, and the person they're referring to, Mike Harris, was elected 22 years ago. Sheamus, it's time to come into the 21st century here. You guys messed this up. You guys are trying to fix it. This won't be the last announcement. They tried in September. 8 per cent reduction! Oh, that went enough. Now 25 per cent reduction which is really a 17 per cent reduction, but don't worry, it's going on the tax base. That means higher taxes coming in the budget if they're going to get to balance. This is a shell game of epic proportions. They've been caught. Everybody sees it today. It's embarrassing, frankly, for this government.

Don: The trouble is, Tom, of course, that people going to be opening much smaller power bills in the next few months. And they have short memories. Is there a concern here from the NDP perspective that voters will forgive and forget, or more likely forget than forgive?

Tom Parkin: There are issues from the past, and there are issues that, before today, are built into the price of Hydro. There was the new meter program that spent a billion dollars that was untendered, and has been a disaster. There was a power plant that was never built, and that cost a further billion dollars. There's an oversupply in the system and we're selling electricity under cost to our competitor jurisdictions. There's just a litany. And the power supply contracts, 20 years, at windfall rates. There's a litany of failures of bad privatization decisions that have been made over the last number of years under the Liberals that are built in. Now, to wipe those away and push those forward in the future, it may make for some ease on the bill every month. But I think it just transfers and transforms that unease into the Premier herself, who really has not addressed the problem, and can't admit to all these things that she's done over the last -- her and her party -- have done over the last number of years. I don't think it ends. It just changes.

Don: All right. It's a message, if you want to get voters angry, get those power bills way up. All right, thank you all. We'll see if this thing spools out as successful damage control or not. Might take a few months to figure that out.