

Morning Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - April 3, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

April 3, 2017

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Print Coverage

Sarnia Observer: Political party leaders set to land in Lambton; A1 / Front; 2017.04.03

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Political party leaders set to land in Lambton

Ontario political heavyweights and upwards of 130 business and chamber of commerce leaders are descending on Point Edward come May as Lambton's business advocacy organization hosts the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's annual general meeting.

It's the first time in a decade the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce has hosted the annual weekend convention, said local chamber CEO Shirley de Silva.

"It's an opportunity for us to showcase our region," she said.

From May 4 to 7, a series of networking, debate and workshop events are planned at the Point Edward Holiday Inn, including discussions with Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown and NDP leader Andrea Horwath. Premier Kathleen Wynne has been invited but hasn't booked yet, de Silva said.

It's significant that political decision-makers are visiting the community, she noted.

"It makes us top of mind," she said.

"Otherwise, out here in the west end of the province, you tend to forget Sarnia at times. It's always a good opportunity."

Horwath and Bob Delaney, parliamentary assistant to Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault, recently made separate visits to the area, meeting with Sarnia chamber officials and members to talk about their respective party plans to rein in hydro costs.

Green Party leader Mike Schreiner also stopped in Sarnia-Lambton last week as part of a Southwestern Ontario tour.

The City of Sarnia has been tapped to provide shuttles from the airport and around the city, as needed, at a cost of about \$3,000, city manager Marg Misek-Evans recently reported. The money comes from the city's special projects fund, which has a balance of more than \$19,000, she said.

It's part of an event sponsorship, in partnership with the Sarnia Lambton Industrial Alliance (SLIA) - a group of industrial services and metal fabricating companies in the region - that also nets a display at the convention's signature dinner event with details about a proposed \$11.4-million oversized load corridor project, she said.

The city, chamber and other proponents are seeking federal and provincial aid for the project - to raise utility lines, and widen and improve roads to make it easier and less expensive for Sarnia fabricators to move large industrial equipment to the harbour.

A recent business case study said the corridor would pay for itself through new jobs and additional economic activity by helping to make bids by local metal fabricators more competitive.

Sarnia-Lambton MP Marilyn Gladu said recently there is funding in this year's federal budget that could be used for the project. tkula@postmedia.com

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Northern Daily News (Kirkland Lake): Hydro One's top 5 execs paid \$11.7M; A2; 2017.04.03

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Hydro One's top 5 execs paid \$11.7M

Ontario's cabinet minister in charge of government purse strings says the \$4.5-million pay received by Hydro One's CEO is "not part of the equation" of cutting electricity costs for consumers. Treasury Board President Liz Sandals made the remarks on the eve of the release of the so-called sunshine list, which sets out the salaries of all public-sector employees making \$100,000 or more. Both opposition parties complain that even though the government still owns most of Hydro One - 30 per cent has been sold - those salaries won't appear on the sunshine list because of its status as a private company.

Financial regulations require Hydro One to disclose the salaries of its CEO, CFO and next three highest-paid executives.

New filings show that CEO Mayo Schmidt was paid \$4.5 million in 2016 - an \$850,000 salary plus bonuses - and those top five executives were paid a total of about \$11.7 million.

Sandals says "clearly that's a very large amount," but "the CEO salary is not part of the equation of will we be able to make the cut" to electricity bills.

The Liberal government has promised that residential and small business electricity consumers will see an average cut of 17 per cent on their bills this summer.

PC Energy Critic Todd Smith, meanwhile, announced that he is tabling a private member's bill to put Hydro One salaries back under the public's watchful eye.

"The (Kathleen) Wynne Liberals don't want the people of Ontario to know that their rates have helped create a new millionaire's club at Hydro One," said Smith.

Earlier this week it was revealed that Hydro One's CEO made \$4.5 million, roughly \$500,000 more than was anticipated.

Earlier in the year, it was revealed that the CEO of Ontario Power Generation could have been in the line for a \$2.3-million raise.

"It's clear that Ontario's system is broken. Life is harder than ever before, but millionaire executives are raking in massive pay hikes. The Ontario PCs are calling on the Wynne Liberals to institute some checks and balances to fix this broken system," added Smith. "If the Wynne Liberals are too out of touch to listen, we will take action to address this problem ourselves."