

Morning Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - June 21, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN:HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

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[The Belleville Intelligencer : Napanee presents concerns; About 50 residents hear presentations from Ontario Energy Board about rate application](#)

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THE BELLEVILLE INTELLIGENCER Napanee presents concerns; About 50 residents hear presentations from Ontario Energy Board about rate application

Approximately 50 Napanee area residents came out to the Strathcona Paper Centre on Monday to hear presentations from the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and Hydro One regarding its 2018-2022 Distribution Rate Application.

Napanee was the second of nine community meetings being held in June and July across the province for Hydro One customers to learn more about the utility company's electricity rate application.

All Ontario utilities, including Hydro One, must apply to the OEB to change their distribution rates. These rates are the delivery charges, not the cost of the electricity used by consumers. There were no official representatives from the Town of Greater Napanee, although presenters had met earlier with Greater Napanee mayor Gordon Schermerhorn and councillor Roger Cole. Shaune Lucas, a member of town council attended the evening meeting.

Prior to and following the formal meeting residents had the opportunity to speak with representatives from the OEB and Hydro One. A series of information panels was set up around the banquet hall. During the meeting, there were slide presentations explaining the role of the OEB and how consumers can get involved in the OEB's review of the Hydro One rate application.

"The OEB helps control costs for all consumers," said Kristi Sebalj from the OEB, "by reviewing and testing the requested rate change through an open, robust, and inclusive rate review process. We work hard to keep rates as low as possible while making sure the utilities have what they need to keep the lights on."

The presentation from Hydro One discussed its distribution plans and need to replace aging infrastructure. Both presentations included information about the Fair Hydro Plan, a recent initiative of the Ontario Liberal government, which came into effect on June 1. Some of the people in attendance at the meeting, including Todd Smith, Prince Edward-Hastings MPP, who is the Conservative party's Energy Critic, felt that the inclusion of this information was partisan, and took the opportunity to voice his objections to this legislation. Others expressed similar concerns.

"The Fair Hydro Act (FHA) is a piece of legislation that is in place and there has been some confusion about the impact the FHA has on Hydro One's application to the OEB," said Natalie Poole-Moffatt, vice-president of Corporate Affairs at Hydro One "We are not defending it, or supporting it. We feel we have an obligation to help people understand a bit more about what goes on with the distribution of their electricity; what goes on behind the walls once you flip on that light switch, and how all of that is affected by the FHA."

Following the presentations from the OEB and Hydro One, several residents made presentations discussing the impact they feel a rate increase will have on them and others in the community. One of the presentations came from Shannon Russell, who is working with what she called a "grass-roots" organization, We Own It, that wants to see all public institutions such as Hydro One remain public, and not

continue to be privatized.

"I have heard from or personally met with approximately 3,000 people in eastern Ontario who are very much against the privatizing of Hydro One, which they feel is contributing to the higher profits for the corporations, and higher rates for consumers," Russell said.

The community meetings are one stage of the application review process. Hydro One filed its application to the OEB on March 31, and hopes to have a decision by January 2018.

Customer input is welcomed at future meetings in Rockland, Owen Sound, Ancaster, Stouffville, Dryden, Walden/Sudbury and Muskoka. The dates, locations, and times of the meetings are posted on the OEB website, www.oeb.ca/participate/community-meetings. Consumers are also welcome to comment on the Hydro One application by contacting the OEB. The toll-free phone number is 1-877-632-2727. Letters can be sent to the OEB, 2300 Yonge Street, Suite 2701, Toronto, ON M4P 1E4, or contact them online.

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