Morning Media Scna: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - May 20, 2017

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Saturday Media Scan: May 20, 2017

Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Pla

May 20, 2017

Click links below to view article:

Print Coverage

Toronto Sun 'It's Disgusting'; Tories rip Grits over report cancel additional $1.5B

IDNUMBER 201705200038
DOCID: 273778118
PUBLICATION:
PAGE: A5
DATE: 2017.05.20
SECTION: News
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Shawn Jeffords
SOURCE: Toronto Sun
KEYWORDS: chronic,progressive,conservatives,slamming,liberal,government
ILLUSTRATION: Toronto Sun Files / The gas plant in Mississauga was one of two plants the Liberals cancelled in 2011 at a cost the auditor general originally pegged at $1.2 billion.; Dave Abel, Toronto Sun Files / Progressive Conservative Energy Critic Todd Smith says the additional costs surrounding the cancelled gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga are "disgusting.";
WORD COUNT: 389

Talk about a chronic pain in the gas.

Ontario's Progressive Conservatives are slamming the Liberal government after media reports revealed the cost for the now infamous gas plant scandal has jumped by more than $1.5 billion.

That's in addition to the $1.2 billion previously revealed by the auditor general, the Tories say.

CTV News revealed Thursday that Ontario ratepayers will now have to start shelling out on their hydro bills for the two relocated gas plants behind the infamous scandal.

The price tag to build the Sarnia gas plant sits at $360 million and the Napanee plant at $1.2 billion, CTV says.

PC Energy Critic Todd Smith called the costs "disgusting."

"All of that has to be recovered in the customer rate-base - the electricity customer's bills," Smith said.

In 2011, the Liberals promised to move two controversial gas plant developments, one in Oakville and one in Mississauga.

Initially, it was believed the election promise would cost taxpayers $230 million.

Ontario's auditor general revealed in 2013 that the real cost to taxpayers was closer to $1.2 billion.

"It's disgusting really because it's complete waste by the government," Smith said. "These plants were intended to go in the GTA ... That's where growth is occurring in the Golden Horseshoe and the GTHA. So the need for generation in that area was real. It's still real."

He said the government decision was done to save Liberal seats in the 2011 election but the consequences are still being felt today.

What's worse, the plants in Sarnia and Napanee will sit idle much of the time, Smith said.

Colin Nekolaichuk, spokesman for Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault, disputed the claim that these costs are in addition to those previously identified by the auditor general.

"These are the costs of now running the natural gas fired generators, just like any other generator in the province," Nekolaichuk said. "The figures mentioned in media reports are the capital costs of these facilities, which would be paid for regardless of where these plants were built and have been factored into rates since the 2013 Long-Term Energy Plan."

Nekolaichuk said the government has accepted the auditor general's finding on the relocation of the gas plants and made improvements "to ensure that new build generation is appropriately sited at the outset of the planning process." sjeffords@postmedia.comx

Simcoe Reformer: Fair Hydro Law Merely Kicks The Can Down The

IDNUMBER 201705200017
DOCID: 273783539
PUBLICATION: Simcoe Reformer
PAGE: A4
DATE: 2017.05.20
SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Toby Barrett
SOURCE: Simcoe Reformer
KEYWORDS: ontario,electricity,rates,highs,government,added
COLUMN: Mpp Report
WORD COUNT: 554

Ontario electricity rates are at all-time highs, in part, because the Ontario government has added $35 billion in generation costs since 2003. the recently introduced fair Hydro act is the third attempt by this government to overhaul the electricity system since 2009. the first attempt, the Green energy act, is what brought us to this point. across Ontario we now have high prices, excess supply, diminishing demand, and overpriced contracts. case in point, the largest coal-fired generating station in North America, at Nanticoke, will soon be dismantled and replaced by solar panels. that means a 4,000 megawatt generating facility that produced electricity at 3 cents/kilowatt hour will be replaced by a 44-megawatt facility that will cost electricity users 15.67 cents/kilowatt hour. and the millions in municipal taxes, economic spinoff and 650 high paying jobs are now long gone. another example of out-of-control electricity would be this year's easter weekend -a very costly weekend for Ontarians at $78 million. Not only did government spend $28 million on the thursday night before Good friday to pay off a cancelled wind generator, but also government paid $50 million to balance the grid. easter had variable weather - wind, sun, cloud, rain in repeating cycles - resulting in stop and go generation from wind and solar. When you have to be constantly peaking up gas plants to fill the gaps, you're paying a price for that. as a result, ontario paid $50 million for natural gas generated electricity when demand was the third-lowest in the province's history. the fair Hydro act is a fictional 25 per cent Band-aid solution. this latest hydro scheme doesn't help struggling families; it's designed to help a party with struggling polling numbers. a recently leaked cabinet document says very clearly that because of their hydro plan, there will be a temporary 25 per cent decrease, but it will be matched by a 61 per cent increase after the next election. So ratepayers get a temporary decrease and then a 61 per cent hit. as opposition leader Patrick Brown explained during Question Period: "this fair hydro plan is a borrowing plan: it kicks the can down the road. it does nothing on reining in executive salaries. it does nothing on these bad contracts. it does nothing on the water power spilling every day. it does nothing on the hydro we're giving for free to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. it's not a plan; it's a re-election gimmick. When will the government actually show us a hydro plan with hydro rates going down?" coming on the heels of the leaked cabinet document, we also learn from reports that the cost of the gas plant scandal more than doubles to over $3 billion. ratepayers will be on the hook for an additional $1.56 billion to pay for the replacement gas plants in Sarnia and Napanee, in addition to the original $1.2 billion to cancel the plants in Oakville and Mississauga. the present government has spent 15 years driving up electricity costs. this proposed legislation stretches 15 years of mistakes over 30 years. it's not fair -it does nothing to actually fix the underlying costs in the system that will still be there after the next election when the Band-aid comes off. Toby Barrett is MPP for the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk

The Timmins Daily Press *Wynne's selective when it comes to transpar*

IDNUMBER 201705200014
DOCID: 273783297
PUBLICATION: The Timmins Daily Press
PAGE: A4
DATE: 2017.05.20
SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
SOURCE: - Postmedia Network
KEYWORDS: premier,kathleen,wynne,transparent,government,simple
WORD COUNT: 381

If Premier Kathleen Wynne wants to run an open and transparent government, as she says she does, we have a simple question.

Why is her government putting inserts into hydro bills touting the province's eight per cent rebate, which started Jan. 1, but not including the increased cost of cap and trade as a separate item on home heating and energy bills, which also started Jan. 1? Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault claims advising Ontarians of the eight per cent HST rebate on their hydro bills is so they can plan their budgets.

If so, why didn't the Liberals send out notices informing ratepayers every time they imposed higher electricity rates on Ontarians between 2006 and 2016, during which time rates doubled? Municipal utilities like Toronto Hydro already include the dollar amount of the "8% Provincial Rebate" as a separate line item on their electricity bills to consumers, listed as a credit, so why is the Wynne government informing them of the same thing, again? Of the latest inserts touting the eight per cent HST rebate -similar to notices the Liberals sent out in 2010 touting the nowdefunct 10 per cent Clean Energy Benefit discount, which started in 2011 -Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said they violated the spirit of the Liberal government's advertising rules.

The only reason they didn't violate the rules themselves is that there are no rules on content when the government sends inserts to homeowners.

However, when it comes to government advertising, Wynne in 2015, despite protests by Lysyk, gutted a law passed by her predecessor - Dalton McGuinty - that empowered the auditor general to disallow partisan government advertising.

Since then, Lysyk has criticized numerous ads by the Wynne government, financed by millions of taxpayers'dollars, as inappropriately partisan and self-congratulatory, noting she would not have approved them under the law Wynne gutted.

Finally, the Wynne government's explanation for not including the added cost of cap and trade as a separate item on home heating/energy bills is that the Ontario Energy Board rejected it, as if the Liberals, with a majority government, don't have the power to do whatever they want when it comes to this issue.

What's really going on is that they're manipulating the rules in hopes of winning next year's election.

Some open and transparent government.

Sarnia Observer *Wynne's Liberals: Rules? What rules? [Also in: N Welland Tribune, Sudbury Star, Stratford Beacon-Herald, Simc Standard, The Chatham Daily News, Brantford Expositor, Lond Times-Journal]*

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DOCID: 273784744
PUBLICATION: Sarnia Observer
PAGE: A6
DATE: 2017.05.20
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SOURCE: Sarnia Observer
KEYWORDS: premier,kathleen,wynne,transparent,government,simple
WORD COUNT: 381

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- Postmedia Network

The Sault Star: OLG workers decision worries NDP

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PAGE: A1 / Front
DATE: 2017.05.20
SECTION: News
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Brian Kelly
SOURCE: The Sault Star
KEYWORDS: decision,ontario,lottery,gaming,workers,sault
ILLUSTRATION: Brian Kelly, Sault Star / Provincial NDP candidate Joe Krmpotich greets Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath at a media event on the boardwalk on St. Mary's River Drive on Friday.;
WORD COUNT: 569

A decision by Ontario Lottery and Gaming workers in Sault Ste.Marie to decertify from Public Service Alliance of Canada is "worrisome" to provincial NDP Leader Andrea Horwath.

Results of the Wednesday vote, ordered by Ontario Labour Relations Board, "shocked" Horwath.

"If the OLG as a government organization has been trying to influence the representation of the people that work there, in other words trying to influence whether or not they continue to be union members, that's a very worrisome thing," she told reporters on Friday. "We're going to get some more details as to exactly what happened there. And, if in fact, the government has been trying to influence whether or not workers are going to be represented by a union, then we would be saying something about it."

PSAC started to represent nearly 400 OLG workers in Sault Ste. Marie in the fall of 2015. The union was not able to negotiate a first contract with OLG after a year of negotiations.

Horwath questions the Ontario government's plans for the Crown corporation in the city.

"The question becomes are they trying to drive down the quality of jobs that are here," said Horwath. "That's what I worry about."

An OLG spokesperson wouldn't comment specifically on Horwath's comments, noting the OLG is a government agency. The Crown agency reports, through its board of directors, to the Minister of Finance.

But Rui Brum told The Sault Star the application for decertification was initiated by unionized workers at OLG's office on Foster Drive.

"The issues and dispute are entirely between the unionized employees and the union," he said.

Horwath's most recent stop in Sault Ste. Marie ahead of the June 1 byelection centred on an upcoming committee hearing dealing with the government's planned Ontario Fair Hydro Plan.

In March, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced the Liberals would cut hydro rates by 17 per cent.

Financing the savings, says Horwath, will cost about $40 billion over three decades.

"Folks around the province are going to be paying for this mess for the next 30 years," she said. "People can't afford (electricity prices) now. There's no way that they can afford a 50 or 60 per cent increase in their bills (in four to 10 years)."

The Progressive Conservatives recently leaked a cabinet document showing hydro rates would climb 6.5 per cent annually between 2022 and 2027 followed by a 10.5 per cent hike in 2028.

Wynne and Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault call the documents released by the Tories outdated.

Horwath encourages Sault residents opposed to Bill 132, Fair Hydro Act, to speak up during hearings in Toronto that run Tuesday to Thursday.

Written submissions can be made until 4 p.m. on Wednesday. Email clerk Christopher Tyrell at ctyrell@ola.org or call 416-325-3883.

The Liberals, Horwath says, are "rushing through legislation that will drive up electricity costs and leave residents on the hook for billions of dollars all in an attempt to buy votes before the next election."

"We need to send Wynne a message that we want rates lowered and we want them to stay low," said NDP candidate Joe Krmpotich during a media event on the boardwalk on St. Mary's River Drive.

He is "deeply troubled" by PC candidate Ross Romano's declaration that he would not bring Hydro One back to public ownership.

The byelection is June 1.

-with files from Postmedia Network btkelly@postmedia.com On Twitter: @Saultreporter

Orillia Packet & Times *Brown rallies against privatization*

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PUBLICATION: Orillia Packet & Times
PAGE: A1 / Front
DATE: 2017.05.20
SECTION: News
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Andrew Philips
SOURCE: Special To The Packet &Amp; Times
KEYWORDS: troops,certainly,rallying,opposition,leader,patrick
ILLUSTRATION: Andrew Philips, Special To The Packet & / Simcoe North MPP and Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown speaks Friday outside the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene during an event organized by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.; Times / ;
DATELINE: PENETANGUISHENE
WORD COUNT: 570

These troops certainly didn't need much rallying from Opposition leader Patrick Brown.

The Simcoe North MPP and Ontario Progressive Conservative leader arrived Friday afternoon at an Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) event outside the Central North Correctional Centre to discuss the dangers of privatizing the province's public entities and services.

"Some people would be saying, 'What is the leader of the Progressive Conservatives doing at an OPSEU rally?'" Brown asked rhetorically.

"But there's no monopoly on a good idea. We need to learn from history, learn from past mistakes.

I don't care if it's a Liberal idea, an NDP idea or a Progressive Conservative idea."

Under sunny skies and with a cool breeze wafting off nearby Georgian Bay, Brown and other union representatives discussed how to best preserve provincial institutions and jobs.

OPSEU's first vice-president/treasurer, Eduardo (Eddy) Almeid, warned about the dangers of privatization, including of the province's water.

OPSEU had a large tent set up near the road beside the super-jail to drum up support for its We Own It campaign, which aims at ending what it views as privatization of provincial institutions, including the LCBO through the ongoing sale of beer, cider and wine in grocery stores.

"We're protecting the publicservice jobs," Central North correctional officer Andrew Parker said, noting the province currently nets $2.4 billion through the liquor agency, money that would be lost if it's eventually privatized.

"The Liberals seem to have that plan of shifting towards privatization."

Later, Parker addressed Brown directly: "Mr. Brown, if you happen to be our next premier, it's time to be proactive rather than reactive."

That sentiment was echoed by fellow correctional officer and union representative Chris Jackel: "We need a commitment from the current government and future governments that they will resist privatization."

Almeid tried to have Brown sign the "public-service pledge" for the We Own It campaign, something Brown didn't do then and there, but he said he would study and discuss further with OPSEU president Warren "Smokey" Thomas.

"It's been a real pleasure to work with Smokey and her about some of the concerns in the province," Brown said, noting one jail he toured in Thunder Bay was in such disrepair, an inmate was able to take a cell door off and hold a guard hostage. "We hear your concerns."

Brown also took aim at delays in the mental-health system caused by staffing shortages.

As an example, he said, people encouraged to seek help through widespread media campaigns are told they'll have to wait weeks or even months for treatment.

"If someone has the courage to come forward, we need to make sure we have the proper resources in the province (to help them)," he said.

Brown credited former premier Bill Davis as being instrumental in creating many of the institutions and infrastructure Ontario residents now rely on and are proud of having.

He said the current government is on a dangerous path and that by privatizing Hydro One, the utility will lose its transparency since Ontario residents won't be able to view the salaries of its top employees through the province's annual public-disclosure process.

"I'm proud to oppose the fire sale of Hydro One," Brown said, adding there's something wrong when the CEO of Hydro One is paid $4.7 million a year while his Quebec counterpart earns $400,000.

"They're selling our treasured assets to prop up (the province's) books." andrewphilips@live.ca

Owen Sound Sun Times: Hydro bills should show good and bad

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SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
SOURCE: Postmedia Network
KEYWORDS: premier,kathleen,wynne,transparent,government,simple
WORD COUNT: 379

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If so, why didn't the Liberals send out notices informing ratepayers every time they imposed higher electricity rates on Ontarians between 2006 and 2016, during which time rates doubled? Municipal utilities like Toronto Hydro already include the dollar amount of the "8% Provincial Rebate" as a separate line item on their electricity bills to consumers, listed as a credit, so why is the Wynne government informing them of the same thing, again? Of the latest inserts touting the eight per cent HST rebate -similar to notices the Liberals sent out in 2010 touting the now-defunct 10 per cent Clean Energy Benefit discount, which started in 2011 -Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said they violated the spirit of the Liberal government's advertising rules.

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Daily Observer (Pembroke): Way too many 'errors'

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SECTION: Opinion
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SOURCE: Postmedia News
KEYWORDS: premier,kathleen,government,believe,horrid,treatment
WORD COUNT: 381

Premier Kathleen Wynne's government wants you to believe its horrid treatment of Maureen, a 75-year-old woman who was the victim of a government test program gone awry, is an exception to the rule.

It was, the government says, a rare case of "human error," even if government bureaucrats had the gall to suggest she hire a lawyer to remove an obviously fictitious lien on her van placed by "Fred and Pebbles Flintstone" of "Yellow Brick Road".

It wasn't until Maureen tried to sell the van that she learned of the lien.

Thanks to Progressive Conservative MPP Randy Hillier, we know it took nine months for the government to acknowledge the lien was the result of a government worker erroneously putting the lien on her van - and possibly other vehicles -while testing Ontario's vehicle registration system.

Given the clearly fictitious names and address on the lien, this should have been resolved in a matter of hours, if not minutes, when the mistake was first brought to the government's attention.

The larger problem is, this wasn't an isolated incident.

Former Ontario ombudsman Andre Marin, for example, reported after an investigation into Hydro One that after the utility took too much money out of the bank accounts of its customers to pay their hydro bills, it refused to give it back, agreeing only to credit it against future charges.

Former auditor general Jim McCarter revealed the government's own energy experts told the Liberals they didn't need to make the Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) program for wind and solar power developers as financially generous as it was, to meet their environmental goals.

The Liberals did it anyway, costing electricity ratepayers an extra $4.4 billion over 20 years, according to McCarter.

A CBC news investigation found the Liberals'environment ministry misled people who contacted it to complain about ill health effects from wind turbines -telling them they were the only ones complaining, when in fact hundreds of people were. This happened even as the same ministry was internally warning the government its noise limits and setbacks were inadequate, hard to monitor and difficult to enforce.

These examples have nothing to do with "human error," which is forgivable when mistakes are quickly admitted and corrected.

This is about a Liberal government that, demonstrably, no longer deserves the public's trust.

London Free Press: Irresponsible plan

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PAGE: A14
DATE: 2017.05.20
SECTION: Letters
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Robert Webb
SOURCE: London Free Press
KEYWORDS: kathleen,electricity,relief,program,involves,lower
DATELINE: London
WORD COUNT: 95

Kathleen Wynne's government's electricity rate relief program involves lower rates made possible by taking out billion-dollar loans that will mean much higher rates after the next election. this approach is irresponsible and the work of a financially bankrupt government with morally corrupt leadership.

Can you imagine telling your children that, in death, you are leaving them your $1 million home as part of your estate, but they later learn the property they inherited has a $3-million mortgage and somehow that mortgage is attached to the inheriting family member? No thanks, Ms Wynne.

Robert Webb

London

The Belleville Intelligencer: Green ideologies costing province

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EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Larry Comeau
SOURCE: The Belleville Intelligencer
KEYWORDS: hydro,rates,politics,decade,ontario,liberals
DATELINE: Ottawa
WORD COUNT: 211

(Re: Hydro rates and politics, Wednesday, May 17 edition)

It is mind-boggling that it took over a decade of the Ontario Liberals pushing its green obsession, that has resulted in many large companies fleeing the province, taking thousands of good paying jobs with them, for Ontarians to finally realize escalating hydro prices are crippling them and our have-not province.

One only has to visit some of the small towns in Eastern Ontario and observe the large number of small businesses closed, largely because they could not keep up with hydro bills, to see the devastation of Wynne's green dream.

Yet, Wynne is wilfully blind to the problem, as she pushes ahead installing even more highly subsidized wind turbines and solar systems. As foreign companies continue raking in billions supplying these devices, the so called 'green jobs'have never materialized and our province's landscape has been blighted.

Just last year a Wynne green plan was uncovered whereby she would have forced homeowners to switch from natural gas to electric heat. Thankfully, when the plan was leaked, Wynne backtracked. This is the most ideologically driven, fiscally irresponsible and greenobsessed government in Ontario history.

Ontarians better remember the havoc it has wrecked on our once prosperous province when they vote next year.

Larry Comeau

Ottawa