

FW: Afternoon Media Scan: Fair Hydro Plan - March 22, 2017

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From: Electronic Media

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Subject: Afternoon Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - March 22, 2017

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Online Coverage

SarniaThisWeek.com ELECTRICITY RATE RELIEF AT THE CENTRE OF QUEEN'S PARK DEBATE

By: Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey

March 22, 2017

<http://www.sarniathisweek.com/2017/03/22/electricity-rate-relief-at-the-centre-of-queens-park-debate>

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario resumed sitting on February 21st. Activity has been at a fever pitch in the first few weeks back. Electricity prices continue to dominate the discussion.

Premier Wynne has finally acknowledged the damage that has been done by the Liberal government's energy policy and is now frantically searching for a way to lower energy bills. I'm glad that Premier Wynne has announced rate relief; I support rate relief because Ontarians are suffering. However, many in the public and media seem skeptical of the Premier's plan, which will shift billions of dollars in energy system costs onto the bills of future electricity users. These electricity customers (you, your kids, and your grandkids) will pick up the tab for billions in new interest charges - \$14 billion in interest payments to be exact – as the Premier attempts to reduce prices today, or at least until the next provincial election in 15 months. Unfortunately, this pricey band aid fails to address the root causes of higher electricity prices in Ontario, most of which can be traced back to the costly energy contracts that the Liberal government signed, with the full support of the NDP, under the disastrous Green Energy Act.

The Official Opposition PC Caucus is the only Party prepared to stop the bad contracts by repealing the Green Energy Act. As a Party, we've been working on our plan and now that we have details of what the government is doing, we're in a position to finalize it. Further details will be announced very soon.

Late last month I was fortunate to have my Private Member's Bill, Bill 88 – Asbestos Use Prohibition Act, unanimously pass second reading debate at Queen's Park. The debate included comments in support of the bill from both the Minister of Labour and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I'm encouraged to have the support of two prominent members of cabinet; hopefully they can help to persuade the Premier to move Bill 88 through the legislative process without any further delays. Sarnia's Mayor Mike Bradley has been calling for a ban on asbestos in the workplace since 2001, this issue shouldn't have taken this long to solve. It's time that the Province of Ontario demonstrates leadership on this issue and puts a stop to the use of asbestos and asbestos products in the province once and for all. I will continue to push forward this initiative; I thank all those in the community who have offered their support.

Finally, I want to mention a very special ceremony that I attended last week in Sarnia. On March 13th at the Dante Club, the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration hosted the 2017 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards to publicly thank local volunteers for the many hours of volunteer activity that they contribute to our community.

This year's Volunteer Service Awards ceremony in Sarnia honoured 188 volunteers from Lambton County. 6 more Lambton County volunteers were honoured at a ceremony in Chatham on March 16th. It was very inspiring to see such a large group of dedicated and passionate people. It was great to see many volunteers receiving awards for the first time for 2 or more years of continuous service to an organization. It was even more amazing to see how many volunteers received awards for decades of service; there were more than a few volunteers receiving awards for 45, 50, even 55 years of continuous service. I do my best to attend this annual event each year. To have such a large group to celebrate and to have so many with such great service records speaks volumes about the character and quality of the people of Sarnia-Lambton. Congratulations to all of this year's Volunteer Service Award recipients, your contributions to our community are truly appreciated.

Toronto Star: SHAMELESS GALL OF PREMIER WYNNE
March 21, 2017

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/03/21/the-shameless-gall-of-premier-wynne>

There's a word in Yiddish that perfectly describes the political philosophy of Premier Kathleen Wynne.

It's "chutzpah", which means shameless audacity, impudence or gall.

Ontarians should be prepared for repeated displays of chutzpah by Wynne as next year's provincial election approaches.

The latest example is a new government radio ad that Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk describes as overtly partisan.

That means it should not have been paid for by taxpayers, but by the Liberal Party of Ontario.

In the ad, explaining Wynne's plan to reduce hydro rates (by taking on more public debt), the narrator tells the audience, among other things, "We've heard you" — meaning the Liberal government.

That is so absurdly partisan that no one — except for Wynne's Liberal government — would seriously claim otherwise.

"We've" heard you? Who's "we"? The Wynne Liberals, of course.

Further, as both PC Leader Patrick Brown and NDP energy critic Peter Tabuns have pointed out, the ad is hyping a government policy that hasn't happened yet.

The hydro rate cuts don't even start until June 1.

But Wynne's chutzpah — her shameless gall — goes further.

That's because in 2015 she gutted a law passed by her predecessor — Dalton McGuinty — that empowered the auditor general to disallow partisan government advertising, over the specific objections of the auditor general.

As Lysyk explained to Sun Political Bureau Chief Shawn Jeffords in an email regarding the

appropriateness of Wynne's hydro ad:

"Our office approved the hydro-related ads under the current version of the Government Advertising Act. However, they would not have passed under the previous legislation because we feel that these ads have the objective of fostering a positive impression of the government."

In fact, ever since 2015, the Wynne Liberals have repeatedly run ads that Lysyk has described as inappropriately partisan and "self-congratulatory" — for example on their now-defunct Ontario pension plan.

That means they're spending millions of taxpayer dollars — in the opinion of the auditor general — promoting themselves in ads that should be paid for by the Liberal party.

The one bit of good news is that Lysyk has cleverly continued to comment on these partisan ads as if the old law was in place, demonstrating the positive side of chutzpah, which can also mean boldness or daring.

TV Transcripts (Noon)

MCTV MPP SMITH ESCORTED OUT OF LEGISLATURE DURING HYDRO AD DEBATE

Source: MCTV

Mar 22, 2017 12:08 PM (10)

Anchor: Some tense moments at Queen's Park this week with the Speaker of the House actually threatening to expel an MPP. As CTV's Paul Bliss reports, it was all part of a heated debate over the Liberals' use of tax dollars to advertise and promote their hydro rate plan.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: They actually have no plan!

Reporter: The ruckus was well underway when the Speaker had enough, and gave PC MPP Todd Smith the boot.

Dave Levac, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is named.

Reporter: But watch as an angry Smith refuses to leave, so upset over the Liberal spending tax dollars to promote their 25 per cent hydro bill cut he stood his ground, pointed his finger and yelled. This caused the Sergeant-at-Arms to approach and escort him out of the Chamber, venting his frustration even as he was ejected.

House Speaker Levac: The member might not have known it, but he was very close to being expelled. That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this House. That goes for anybody. That's disrespectful and I won't tolerate it.

Reporter: The PCs have accused the Liberal government of being in contempt of Parliament for using taxpayers' money to fund radio ads to boast about their 25 per cent cut to hydro bills when the legislation hasn't even passed yet.

Reporter: And this is the late promotional prop that is infuriating the opposition. The Liberal Party dispatched volunteers to Toronto subway stations this morning, handing out pamphlets to boost the hydro plan.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They don't seem to care what the Auditor General says, they don't seem to care this is disrespectful to taxpayers and they may even be in contempt of Parliament.

Reporter: The government says it has every right to advertise the 25 per cent hydro rate reduction to give families a chance to plan their budgets accordingly.