Ministry of Energy Top Issues - March 13, 2017

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Date: Mon, 13 Mar 2017 07:34:44 -0400

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

– Citizens' group prepares to begin testing of wells in Dover Township – Windsor Star
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– Wynne's paying for McGuinty's blunders -- Ottawa Sun
– Wynne spares no expense, with our money, to get re-elected -- Toronto Sun
– ANALYSIS | No sign that Liberal knives are truly out for Kathleen Wynne -- CBC News
– Ontario is lowering electricity bills by 25% on average -- Wawa-news.com
– FortisOntario Inc. Completes Transaction to Increase its Investment in Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project – Marketwired
– Innisfil residents ready to revolt against InnPower rate increase -- Innisfil Journal
– Water Wells First Ramps Up Pressure On Wind Developers -- Blackburnnews.com
– Efficiency motivates OPG; North Bay jobs being transferred to 'save money on ratepayers' bills' -- North Bay Nugget
– Lloyd Robertson Moderates DGR Talk -- Blackburnnews.com
– Union Gas Still Investigating Impact Of Cap And Trade -- Blackburnnews.com
– Don't be fooled by hydro 'scheme,' PCs says -- Minden Times
– Brace yourself; still a long way to go -- The Barrie Examiner
– Pay less, own more -- Orillia Packet & Times

Citizens' group prepares to begin testing of wells in Dover Township
Windsor Star
Mon Mar 13 2017
Page: A3
Section: City & Region
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
Source: The Windsor Star

Landowners who want to ensure they can mount a challenge if they believe an industrial wind turbine is damaging their water well will need to have the proper baseline testing done by a qualified tester.

The Water Wells First citizen group introduced the person they have enlisted to conduct this baseline testing before construction starts on the North Kent 1 wind farm project in the Chatham Township area during a public meeting in Oungah last week at Country View Golf Course.

Bill Clarke, a retired hydrogeologist, told those in attendance that well interference is a change in the quantity or quality of somebody's water well caused by something that is being done nearby.

Water Wells First has been raising concerns that it believes vibrations from industrial turbines, constructed with piles being driven into the heavy metalladen Kettle Point black shale bedrock formation in the region, have damaged water wells in Dover Township.

The concern is the same will happen when turbines are erected in the same fashion for the North Kent Wind project.

While the baseline water testing Clarke is conducting costs about $2,000, he said it is being done through a legal chain of custody that is viewed as acceptable in a court of law.

He said this is "extremely important" because what has been found in Dover is that people observed a change in their water wells as far as an anecdotal story goes, according to the Ministry of Environment."

But, there isn't a "before criteria" in comparison to what's happened in time based on the observation of the residents, Clarke said.

He added: "The Ministry of Environment has told us straight out that this is interesting and of concern, but there is a very doubtful way that this could be entered into the Ontario Water Resources Act, reg. 903, in order to say this is truly a well interference, because we don't have the scientific support to follow that course of action."

Clarke said the samples being collected in the North Kent Wind project area are "representative of pre-construction, pre-disturbed or better still, historical, like thousands of years that's been the status of the aquifer."

He added obtaining "pre-construction" samples from wells in the North Kent Wind area provides the chance to see if groundwater quality changes with the construction of wind turbines in the area.

Of particular concern is the heavy metals such as uranium, arsenic and mercury found in Kettle Point black shale bedrock.

Clarke said these materials are so fine that it is difficult to filter them out, so it causes water systems to not function properly.

Kevin Jakubec, spokesperson for Water Wells First, told the crowd he and a few other residents have found turbidity tests done by AECOM, the firm hired to do baseline well testing for the wind developer, don't seem to be accurate.

"It seems to be extremely inaccurate," he added.

Jakubec said he did a "challenge test" by taking water samples to a lab in Windsor.

“We saw that when we compared the turbidity on the field test that AECOM took to the test that were taken from another lab … they don’t jive, they’re really out.”

Lab results from Windsor on the turbidity of his water were 0.2 to 0.4 NTU (Nephelometric Turbidity Units) compared to a score of 31 the AECOM testing showed for turbidity on his well water that looked clear, he said.

Jakubec said a letter has been delivered to Samsung Electronics Canada Inc. CEO Gi Yong Seo, asking that his corporation stop construction of the North Kent Wind farm and that it invest in groundwater research before allowing pile driving construction into sensitive aquifers.

He noted a response has not been received yet.

'Clean, modern' - and costly; Retired Hydro One employee's bills average nearly $900 in winter
Sudbury Star
Mon Mar 13 2017
Page: A4
Section: News
Byline: Gord Young
Source: Postmedia Network

Joe Steele has been fighting a losing battle against the rising cost to heat his home in Powassan.

Steele, 85, has tried his best to conserve energy by keeping the thermostat down in certain rooms and wearing sweaters on a daily basis.

But his efforts have had little effect on his Hydro One bills, which have - in recent years - averaged nearly $900 during the coldest winter months.

Steele thought installing electric radiant heating in the ceilings was the way to go when he built his modest three-bedroom bungalow a little more than 50 years ago. But Steele, a widower who lives alone, firmly regrets that decision today.

“It was the ‘safe, clean, modern’ way,” he says, recalling how electric heat was marketed at the time.

Ironically, Steele is a retired Hydro One (formerly Ontario Hydro) employee of more than 35 years, most of which were spent in customer service.

“I dealt with a lot of complaints during that time,” he says, proud to have been able to leave customers satisfied more often than not.

“I don’t know how I would answer their questions now. I wouldn’t want to even attempt it.”

Steele says he can’t imagine how high his hydro bills would be if he didn’t live alone.

He plans to stay in his home as long as he can. But Steele worries that when it comes time to sell, electric heating won’t be much of a selling point.

The Liberal government’s promise of hydro relief this summer comes as cold comfort for Steele, who expects his electricity bills will still likely top $700 next winter even with a 17-percent reduction.

Not only that, he doesn’t care much for the plan, which would slash bills largely by paying the costs of electricity generation contracts over longer periods.

“My grandchildren will be paying for it,” says Steele.

He likes the NDP’s proposal of buying back assets of Hydro One and doing away with timeof-use pricing, which also hasn’t helped to put a dent in his bills. And Steele says he’s still waiting to hear how the Tories plan to cut hydro rates.

In the meantime, he’s purchased a $4,000 wood pellet stove to try to take the sting out of his home heating bills. Steele hopes to have it installed in the coming days.

A natural gas line runs past his house, but without ducts installing a furnace was an even more expensive proposition.

“I’m trying to conserve as best I can,” he says, hopeful that the new pellet stove will make a difference.

All parties should lay out their plan for hydro
Waterloo Region Record
Mon Mar 13 2017
Page: A8
Section: EDITORIAL

Next year’s provincial election could be called the hydro vote. Of course there other issues - the length of the Liberal party’s rule, the economy, and others. But nothing resonates with Ontarians right now like hydro rates.

It’s understandable, even though some of the hyperbole being bandied about is over the top. So is laying all the blame at the feet of the Liberals when the Progressive Conservatives also played a role in setting the table.

But whether you agree with the weight being attached to energy as an election issue or not, it is what people are talking about. That’s why the Liberals have finally moved on plans to reduce bills. According to Alectra Utilities, Hamilton ratepayers will get a bigger than average break on their bills, with residential fees set to drop 27 per cent, and small-business rates 28 per cent. That’s not insignificant.

The Liberal plan, though, is something like remortgaging your house. The money will be paid back over a longer period of time, so the resulting interest payments will end up costing more. Does that really matter to people if their bills go down? We’ll see.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath won’t be outshone. She has put forward a plan she says will save up to 30 per cent on bills and doesn't involve remortgaging the house. The plan would allow consumers to opt out of time-of-use pricing, cap profits for private power producers supplying the grid and return Hydro One to full public ownership by buying back shares. This plan will appeal to many, especially since the partial privatization of Hydro One is widely opposed.

But wait, say the Liberals and other skeptics. The money from privatization is being used to fund health and education among other key areas. If that money is used to buy back shares, it will be at the expense of those other priorities. Now the NDP plan doesn't sound quite so solid.

At least the two parties are putting out (relatively) clear messages. And by getting her party's oar in the water on the most significant issue of the election, Horwath automatically positions the NDP as a credible alternative, on this matter at least.

Patrick Brown, come out, come out, wherever you are. The Progressive Conservatives have yet to outline in detail what they'll do on energy. Perhaps because there is still a lot of time left. Perhaps because it's a sticky issue for them, too. After all, it was Brown's party that initiated the last attempt to privatize, which blew up in its face. And it's going to be difficult for a party that believes in privatization to argue for making Hydro One public again. Then again, who would have predicted that the PCs would favour a carbon tax and support a modernized sex education curriculum. So who knows what they might have up their sleeve? They'd be smart to get at least some cards on the table soon though.

Wynne helped create crisis
The Belleville Intelligencer
Mon Mar 13 2017
Page: B2
Section: Opinion
Byline: Ross Ayotte
Source: The Belleville Intelligencer

In 2005 Premier McGuinty and environment minister Laurel Broten stated between 50 to 90 per cent of the air pollution in Ontario was caused by American coal plants which originated in the American midwest - Ohio Valley Broten contacted the US environmental agency stating this including where air pollution was the highest - Sarnia and Windsor were up to 90 per cent air pollution. Then David Miller, former mayor of Toronto, sent Broten a letter stating up to 90 per cent of Toronto's air pollution came from the same source.

The Sierra Club also contacted the American EPA stating that by operating the 150 oldest and dirtiest coal plants in the American midwest - Ohio valley - it affected Ontario's air quality as they were producing roughly 4.5 million tons of sulphur dioxide a year and 1.6 million tons of nitrogen oxide a year, also the Ohio plants were the worst.

Ontario's five coal plants, in comparison, roughly produced 153.750 tons of sulphur and 57.875 tons of nitrogen oxide a year, updated scrubbers would have cleared up to 99.9 per cent of these emissions. McGuinty chose the most expensive route of wind, solar and especially biomass power to replace coal, even stating he would not buy cheap hydroelectric power from Quebec as it would not create jobs in Ontario and he wanted Ontario to be a world leader in wind and solar energy. But the contracts went mostly to foreignowned companies with outrageous contracts. Then Premier Kathleen Wynne made matters worse by staying the course and now she's robbing Peter to pay Paul with different forms of hydro rebates.

The Fraser Institute reported that by closing down Ontario's coal plants it had little improvement to Ontario's air quality, it was largely due to the American's shutting down most of these coal plants and replacing them with clean, cost efficient gas power plants.

It must be noted our premier now was in McGuinty's cabinet when McGuinty and Broten made their statements and probably supported them in 2005 and, now, Premier Wynne is contradicting McGuinty's and Broten's findings and refuting the Fraser Institute's report to glorify herself on what she has achieved to reduce smog days in Ontario.

She is misleading Ontarian's, but she did help create an energy crisis.

London Hydro Customers Still Getting Warning Notices Despite Moratorium on Disconnections
Source: CFPL

Mar 10, 2017 6: 08 PM (6)

Anchor: The province put a hold on hydro disconnects but there are still some stern warnings going out telling people they will have to pay up. And those warnings are raising concerns. Gerry Dewan joins us now. What have London hydro customers been seeing?

Reporter: Well, it's these yellow notices that don't say anything about disconnection but they do make it very clear it's time to pay up. Sarah does her best to limit hydro use and pay her bills on time so it came as a shock when she received one of these notices.

Sarah Mavrikkou, London Hydro Customer: To city of that notice was kind of shocking and just off putting.

Reporter: These yellow warning notices have replaced London hydro's red disconnection notices after the province put a moratorium on hydro disconnects. Mavrikkou received this notice by accident. She had already paid her hydro bill. When her two-year old was diagnosed with epilepsy she knew she would be a stay-at-home mom and she knew that would come at a cost with time of day electricity billing.

Mavrikkou: I am home and I need to do things so it's not very helpful for me.

Reporter: So she feels for others who are getting these yellow notices.

Mavrikkou: When you see those things you immediately react and you are worried about are they cutting something off.

Reporter: London-Fanshawe NDP MPP Teresa Armstrong says her office has received a number of it concerned calls from people thinking their hydro is being cut off and she puts blame at the feet of the Wynne Liberal government.

Teresa Armstrong, NDP MPP: This government has to clarify what they've legislated. They need to be very clear to companies that disconnections are not allowed and they shouldn't be threatening their customers with another card threatening disconnections.

Reporter: But London hydro spokesperson Nancy Hutton says it's important people to understand that the moratorium only lasts until the end of April, pointing out that the yellow notices also include information on getting financial assistance.

Nancy Hutton, London Hydro: When May comes along, they will owe even more because they have had bills in between that time, so what we are trying to do is really help them manage that so they won't be in a worse position come May 1st when the collection process starts up again.

Reporter: Now Hutton says about 2 percent of London hydro customers are currently behind in their payments. She says the best course of action is just to call London hydro and explain the situation. Privacy is protected and every effort is made to find a workable arrangement.

Bob Nault – Electricity Cost Long Standing Issue in Ontario

Net Newsledger
2017-03-11

KENORA – POLITICS – Electricity costs have been a longstanding issue for many Northwestern Ontario residents. In this day and age, people shouldn’t have to choose between buying food and heating their home no matter where they live in Canada. That’s why I applaud the provincial government’s recent step to help reduce energy costs through the Ontario Fair

Hydro Plan.

On Thursday, March 2, 2017, Premier Wynne announced that the provincial government would be lowering electricity bills by an average of 25 per cent for residential customers, beginning this summer. This 25 per cent decrease includes the 8 per cent rebate introduced in January.

More importantly, for the riding of Kenora, we could see reductions of up to 50 per cent based on their electricity consumption through the Fair Hydro Plan and the Rural or Remote Rate Protection (RRRP) Program. Taken together, these changes will deliver the single-largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario's history.

Specific to the region, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit will offer individuals up to $148 per year and families $227 per year. The Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) is now available to even more low income consumers. By applying online you can receive $360-$425 per year, off your bill.

The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit offers up to $1,023 per year in tax credits if you are a low to moderate-income family, and up to $1,165 if you are an eligible senior.

For many of these credits you must apply in order to receive them. I strongly encourage you to go online to the Province's Fair Hydro Plan website<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-fair-hydro-plan> and find out what you're eligible for. This plan will help many families in Northwestern Ontario, and I am very pleased to see Premier Wynne taking these bold steps to make hydro more affordable for everyone.

Cuts to electricity prices had nothing to do with next year's election, says energy minister
Sootoday.com
2017-03-10
Byline: Kenneth Armstrong

The province's recently-announced plan to slash electricity rates by 25 per cent had nothing to do with next year's election, says Ontario energy minister Glenn Thibeault.

When Thibeault took on the energy minister position nine months ago, he was asked to find a ways to reduce electricity costs for Ontarians.

"That's what the premier asked us to do. It didn't necessarily relate to a byelection or the upcoming election," said Thibeault.

The 25 per cent reduction in electricity rates that was announced last week will apply for residents, small businesses and farms.

"It's never too late to do the right thing. We heard from the people of Ontario — we listened and so we acted on that," he said.

Thibeault was speaking about the reduction in electricity rates during a Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce breakfast held this morning at Algoma's Water Tower Inn.

he eight per cent reduction in electricity rates announced by the province in January didn't bring the level of relief people needed, said Thibeault.

As a result, a decision was made to announce an additional 17 per cent reduction — for a total of 25 per cent — beginning this summer.

Thibeault blamed the gradual rise in electricity rates on the province's decision to invest $50 million in generation, transmission and distribution assets after decades of under investment, as well as the decision to eliminate coal, switching largely to renewable energy generation.

"Renewable energy wasn't the problem. It was the how we procured those renewable energy contracts — some of them — back in the early 2000s and 2009," said Thibeault.

The province plans to pay for the rate reduction by refinancing the capital investments, which will add tens of billions of dollars to Ontario's debt over the next few decades, estimates say.

That move concerns Rory Ring, executive director of the local chamber.

"For us, the big challenge in the structure of this is postponing the investment costs and stretching them out over a longer period of time — which means more interest costs. Ontario already has the world's largest sub-national debt. This just adds to that debt," said Ring.

Within the last month, the chamber has hosted Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown, as well as NDP leader Andrea Horwath, which Ring said has offered members a wealth of information leading into a yet-to-be-called byelection.

"I think many eyes will be cast north to Sault Ste. Marie to see what the outcome of this byelection will be," said Ring.

"I think it will be a litmus test as to what we can expect going forward in the (2018) provincial election," he added.

Ring said he would like to see the byelection called sooner than later so local businesses can, once again, have representation in Queen's Park, but said he is not overly concerned that the absence of a member of provincial parliament for the riding is having an adverse effect accessing provincial funding.

Column: New hydro plan 'fairer' for Northern Ontario

The Sudbury Star
2017-03-12
Byline: Special to The Star | Glenn Thibeaut

On March 2, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a plan that will lower residential hydro bills by an average of 17 per cent starting this summer. This significant reduction in rates will go to every household in Ontario with no asterisks, loopholes or exceptions. And your bill won't increase beyond inflation for at least four years.

I don't have to tell you why this is needed. I have heard from people across our province struggling to deal with bills that have gone up too much and too quickly. Household budgets are stretched. Something needed to be done.

What I want to share is how we got to this point, how we're fundamentally restructuring the system to give you the biggest rate cut in Ontario history, and why you can be certain that this change is going to be lasting.

For a long time, Ontario enjoyed one of the best electricity systems around. But for decades, governments of all stripes stopped investing. About 15 years ago, those quick-fixes caught up with us. Brownouts, blackouts and dirty coal plants were a danger to our health, our environment and our economy.

So, we closed all of Ontario's coal plants, built new transmission lines and invested in renewable energy. We now have a clean, reliable system that is going to benefit us for decades. But that came at a price. And the terms we set to finance these necessary renovations weren't fair.

In effect, we put the $50-billion cost of the rebuild onto the hydro bills of just one generation. That was a mistake. It meant high bills because you were paying for past neglect and subsidizing ratepayers who will benefit from these energy assets for years to come. By stretching those costs out over a timeframe that better reflects the lifespan of the assets we're paying for, we can lower everyone's bills today and keep them from jumping back up. That's the fairer way forward.

We have also been asking ratepayers to pay for things that should really be part of the province's budget. Our program to help low-income families afford hydro is one example.

But I want to highlight the Rural or Remote Rate Protection program. The RRRP helps subsidize the high cost of delivering electricity to 350,000 rural residential customers. We're taking the cost of the program off bills and enhancing it so that now about 800,000 homes will qualify for lower delivery charges.

Hydro is a necessity. But for many of us living in the North, high delivery charges were leading to impossible choices between groceries, rent or electricity. That's not right. With this change, everyone in Ontario is going to be paying roughly the same in delivery charges. Again, it comes down to fairness.

As you can imagine, these huge and lasting structural fixes do come with a cost. We can afford it because of Ontario's strengthening economy, which is the fastest growing in Canada. After a decade of deficits, the provincial budget will be balanced this year. Our recovery is on track, but it hasn't been evenly shared.

Many families I speak to, whether in Sudbury or Timmins or Sault Ste. Marie, tell me they aren't any better off than they were before the recession. It is why our team is determined to make sure growth in our economy means more opportunity and security for people in our community and all across Ontario. Using the province's newfound fiscal strength to give everyone the break they need on their hydro bills is the right thing to do for the province and the fair thing to do for your family.

-- Glenn Thibeault is Ontario's Energy minister and Sudbury MPP.

Thibeault says province exploring Sault to Michigan power sales
Sudbury.com
2017-03-11
Byline: Kenneth Armstrong

Energy minister Glenn Thibeault says the province is assisting Michigan in its study to explore the possibility of channeling Ontario-produced electricity to the Upper Peninsula through Sault Ste. Marie.

Thibeault made remarks about the feasibility study, which was requested in the summer by Michigan governor Rick Snyder, at a Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce breakfast this morning.

“We are in initial early stages, but it is something our ministry is committed to working on for the benefit of not only Michigan, but our province,” said Thibeault.

Sault Ste. Marie, with its renewable energy assets, is in a good position to potentially provide electricity across the St. Marys River, said Thibeault.

The feasibility study is being conducted by Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) — the regional transmission operator for most of the state — to find cost savings and increased reliability of electricity transmission to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Thibeault said criticism from opposition party leaders about the province’s practice of selling power to the United States at a loss is only telling half of the story.

The province routinely produces too much electricity to address the needs of consumers, said Thibeault.

By not doing so, he said the province would risk brownouts and blackouts.

Because the excess electricity has to go somewhere, it often is sold to Michigan, New York or other places at a steep discount.

A 2015 study by the auditor general said in some instances between 2009 and 2014 when too much power was produced, the province paid exporters more than $32-million to take our surplus Ontario power.

Thibeault notes when those states require additional electricity from Ontario to meet their needs, that electricity is sold at market value.

In 2015, for instance, Thibeault said the province made $230 million on electricity exports.

That is a stark contrast, said Thibealt, to the province's power generation gap experienced in 2002 while under a Progressive Conservative government.

"But back in 2002, it cost us $700 million to buy power from the (United States)," said Thibeault.

Steve Butland, councillor for Ward 1, said he was satisfied with Thibeault's remarks about the province's plans to participate in the feasibility study.

"I think it is up to us to ensure Sault Ste. Marie and Sault Ste. Marie Michigan are the focal point of the study," said Butland.

The transmission lines could run under the St. Marys River between the twin Saults, suggested Butland.

In a September SooToday article, Tom Vair, who was then Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre's executive director, said the Sault and area was at capacity for renewable energy projects because of the state of aging transmission lines to southern Ontario.

Adding more solar or wind projects in the area could overwhelm the transmission lines.

Creating a corridor to Michigan instead, said Vair, could be an opportunity to expand green energy projects in the area.

Vair has since taken a deputy CAO position with the city of Sault Ste. Marie.

In addition to the various wind and solar projects in the Sault and area, a 7-megawatt battery project currently under construction in the city's east end is scheduled to go online in April, said Butland — with a second battery project in the works.

"We are way ahead of the curve than anybody else is, so let's take advantage of it as best we can," he said.

Long-term energy plan on horizon
The Sault Star
Sat Mar 11 2017
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Elaine Della-Mattia
Source: The Sault Star

A new long-term energy plan that will be released later this year will serve as a blueprint for Ontario's energy needs for the next decade and beyond, Minister Glenn Thibeault said.

Thibeault said the plan, to be released by early summer, has included extensive consultations of stakeholders and is designed to determine the province's energy needs and future energy direction.

That direction is also set to examine whether or not Ontario should grow its energy export market, he told The Sault Star in an interview.

The plan, reviewed every three years, will look firstly at the provincial needs for power but then determine whether Ontario should just generate electricity for itself or become more of an exporter of power.

"We're currently an exporter of power but do we want to make that one of our priorities. It's a discussion that the long-term energy plan with have with our stakeholders to have those sorts of conversations," he said.

Thibeault, now in his post as Energy Minister for about nine months, spoke at a Chamber of Commerce breakfast Friday touting the Liberal government's recent announcement that Ontario customers will see energy bills cut by an average of 25 per cent as a result of restructuring its programs and extending the burden of fixing an underfunded system over a greater length of time.

Thibeault said Ontario already produces extra energy that when unused in the province, is sold elsewhere, including Michigan.

The Michigan Agency for Energy has appointed Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) to conduct a study on the long-term benefits of electric transmission between the Upper Peninsula and Ontario.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is deficient in meeting its energy needs and is in need of a boost.

The study, supported by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, is also supported by Thibeault.

The study, paid for in its entirety by Michigan, will proceed on its own and Ontario doesn't need to insert itself or advocate for the project separately.

"I don't think we need to insert ourselves (in the study). We are already there," he said.

He said it's important to ensure that any sale of Ontario's abundance of energy has a benefit to Ontario's ratepayers, to the province and provide a service to Michigan.

"They're going to be getting clean, green energy," he said.

In the meantime, the ministry will continue to work with Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One about ways to explore opportunities and use their expertise in the process.

"We currently sell power to Michigan and we do make money at the end of the year when we look at our bottom line of where we've spent and sold some of our power although our opposition friends don't often tell that full side of the story," he said.

Thibeault said his ministry will also continue to work through the Ontario ambassador and keeping communication open with the Governor's office to continue to help and promote Ontario energy to the rest of the world.

"It's also something we have to take a deeper look into if that's something we want to start doing, similar to what Hydro Quebec does," he said.

Hydro Quebec has been selling its electricity for about 15 years to markets that have included Ontario, New York State and New Brunswick.

"Many things are being looked at," he said of that process.

Thibeault said Sault Ste. Marie can continue to grow its green energy sector.

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre ideas and technology to create storage will be a key to growth, he said.

"It's not just about creating energy, it's also about conservation, demand response and storage," he said. "That's where I think Sault Ste. Marie will continue to be such a leader in the province."

The time of use program implemented by the province - which sets rates according to how much energy is needed or used at different parts of the day and night - is working, he said, saving about five per cent of overall peak demand.

Thibeault said it is recognized that there are some unique situations in the province that makes time of use difficult for some. A single individual in a downtown condo and a senior couple in Northern Ontario living in their own home are on the same price plan and perhaps shouldn't be.

As such, independent system operators have been tasked with working on a plan that will offer people a choice - time of use plan or a fixed rate plan - to decide which one is right for them.

To Chamber members, Thibeault reiterated Premier Kathleen Wynne's announcement of last week also reminding Chamber of Commerce members that there are a number of programs out there to help businesses reduce their energy costs and urged them to contact local utility providers to determine what programs they would qualify for.

He said that too often, smaller businesses don't realize that they would qualify for some of the programs that exist.

Thibeault said businesses will also receive lower electricity bills as part of the new plan unveiled by Wynne last week.

Thibeault was to also meet Friday with Sault Mayor Christian Provenzano and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre.

Wynne's paying for McGuinty's blunders
Ottawa Sun
Sat Mar 11 2017
Page: N15
Section: Comment
Byline: John Snobelen
Source: Ottawa Sun

In the early days of the Mike Harris government, my friend Jim Wilson stepped out of cabinet briefly while a member of his staff was investigated for an alleged breach of confidentiality.

Jim was not accused of any wrongdoing but, in those more noble days, honour and ministerial responsibility were considered more important than political careers.

A few days later a caucus colleague offered that it wasn't fair that Jim resigned.

I asked my colleague a simple question: "Who promised you political life would be fair?" Political life is many things but fair isn't one of them.

Last week, another friend offered that it probably wasn't fair that Premier Kathleen Wynne carries the burden of Dalton McGuinty's disastrous energy policies.

He pointed out it was McGuinty and his then energy minister, George Smitherman, who brought in the Green Energy Act in 2009.

The McGuinty government promised thousands of jobs in a new green economy with minor increases in hydro rates.

Somehow, Ontario never became a green Camelot.

Instead we got expensive, unreliable and unneeded power and a rural landscape filled with subsidized wind turbines.

Ironically, the roughshod way those wind turbines were dumped on rural communities caused the voter backlash that helped to deny McGuinty a third majority government in 2011.

Without the protection of a Liberal majority in the Legislature, McGuinty couldn't escape the scandal of politically motivated gas plant cancellations that wasted up to $1.1 billion.

A little over four years ago, Wynne replaced McGuinty as premier and assumed the role of chief apologist for the Liberals' energy mess.

I'll cut my friend some slack for thinking Wynne was dealt a bad hand.

It couldn't have been comfortable moving into the premier's suite while the OPP investigated the former premier's staff for allegedly destroying records related to the gas plant cancellations.

But Ontarians gave Wynne a chance to set things right.

She was elected with a majority government in June, 2014.

As the third anniversary of that election looms Wynne's poll numbers are lower than the average IQ at a purse dog convention. So what went wrong? Some of the descent to historically low popularity is the natural slide of a government that has been too long in power.

By the time the next Ontario election rolls around the Liberal party will have been in power for 15 long years.

They have a lot of explaining to do.

The stubborn fact that McGuinty and Wynne have made Ontario the most indebted sub-sovereign borrower in the world will forever be a dark cloud over the Liberals.

Wynne won a majority government because voters believed she could right the ship.

I suspect she intended to do just that.

But two years later, the vision of a fairer Ontario has faded into battles with doctors, payments to teacher unions and an incoherent energy policy.

Last week, Wynne was reduced to explaining that cutting hydro rates by 25% was the fair thing to do even while her government imposed a carbon price on gasoline and home heating fuel, ostensibly to reduce consumption.

Even a politician with Wynne's considerable skills can't square that circle.

Wynne won't complain her fall from grace is unfair. She is made of sterner stuff than that.

But fair or not, Wynne may be heading out the front door of Queen's Park if she can't find a way to connect with the voters who are paying for a decade of Liberal mistakes.

Snobelen was a cabinet minister in the Conservative government of Ontario

Wynne spares no expense, with our money, to get re-elected
Toronto Sun
Sun Mar 12 2017
Page: A15
Section: Comment
Source: Toronto Sun

An alarming prospect for Ontario voters is how much additional financial damage Premier Kathleen Wynne is willing to do to the province's books to win re-election in June, 2018.

Already heading a Liberal government that is the world's most indebted sub-sovereign borrower, where is Wynne going to strike next? Recently it was adding a breathtaking $25 billion to the province's already barely manageable long-term debt in order to lower hydro rates by 17% on June 1, Liberal policies having doubled those rates over the past decade.

Wynne has no plan to operate the hydro system more efficiently to pay for this rate cut. She's merely pushing the cost on to all taxpayers through higher interest charges over a longer period of time.

It was the same with her removal of the 8% provincial portion of the HST from hydro bills on January 1.

Rather than reducing hydro expenditures to pay for the cut, Wynne simply transferred the $1 billion annual cost onto the backs of all taxpayers.

To save a few Liberal seats in the 2011 election, Wynne's predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, spent up to $1.1 billion of public money over 20 years to cancel two unpopular gas plants.

How Wynne, who apologized for that fiasco while blaming McGuinty, can now face Ontarians with a straight face when she's adding $25 billion to their debt to try to save her political hide, beggars belief. And she's just getting started. Consider Wynne's generous contract extensions to Ontario teachers she's financing with our money to assure no school disruptions during next year's election.

This while buying the political support of Ontario's teacher unions with taxpayer money, who we predict will do her dirty work, yet again, this time by attacking Progessive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

Expect Wynne to make similar sweetheart deals with other public sector unions - representing one million workers, a huge voting bloc - while cutting infrastructure cheques to municipalities in order to buy the support of local politicians.

Don't forget all those political IOUs the Liberals are going to call in from, for example, the green energy sector, for those recklessly expensive, 20-year, contracts the Liberals signed with wind and solar developers, some including Liberal insiders, whose companies were generous contributors to the Liberal party.

Same goes for the auto insurance industry. Pretty much every time it asks the Liberals to jump when it comes to improving its bottom line, while making it harder for crash victims to collect on their insurance policies, the Liberals ask “how high”? The Liberals had already more than doubled Ontario‘s debt to over $300 billion before Wynne started figuring out new ways to bribe voters with their own money heading into the 2018 election.

We shudder to think what Ontario‘s books are going to look like by the time she’s done.

ANALYSIS | No sign that Liberal knives are truly out for Kathleen Wynne
CBC News
2017-03-11
Byline: Mike Crawley

One of the questions I get asked most often these days by friends and acquaintances is whether Premier Kathleen Wynne is going to resign to give her Ontario Liberal Party a fighting chance in next year's election.

Rumours certainly abound that there is a concerted movement to push Wynne out.

The people involved (according to the whispers) range from ambitious cabinet ministers who want to be premier, to backbenchers worried about losing their seats, to grassroots Liberals who believe Wynne has irreversibly become a lightning rod for voter anger.

- Why Kathleen Wynne is so unpopular

But if there truly is a movement among Ontario Liberals to topple Wynne so that someone else can lead the party into the 2018 vote, I can't find it.

I've spoken to a range of people who you'd think would delight in seeing the back of Wynne: strong supporters of Sandra Pupatello, her chief rival in the last leadership race; longtime Liberal backroomers who've been frozen out by Wynne's inner circle; and senior officials whose greatest loyalty is to the party, not to Wynne.

Even given the opportunity to speak off the record, none of them purports to smell even a whiff of an imminent revolt.

The strongest statement I could coax out of a senior Liberal (not a Wynne loyalist) is that some key activists in the party are giving her until summer to show signs of a turnaround in the polls.

The knives are not out," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But these people are in the tool-shed and they're sharpening the knives. Whether they use them or not depends on where things go from here."

He said that Wynne would only step down if there is pressure from "a combination of caucus members and the party executive." He added that he sees no evidence of such pressure now.

- Wynne ready for voters' judgment in next election

One of Wynne's staunchest allies, Deputy Premier Deb Matthews, dismissed talk of dissension in the ranks.

"Kathleen Wynne has really strong support in our caucus, in our party membership," said Matthews in an interview.

'Our best weapon'

Matthews is also co-chair of the Ontario Liberal re-election campaign and insisted that Wynne is the best person to lead the party into the 2018 vote "because she's smart, really hard working, cares deeply about issues that matter to people and gets the job done."

Another senior party official — who also said he sees no sign of a desire to dump Wynne — called her "our best weapon."

Here's something else that makes me skeptical there really is a movement to push Wynne out: the fact that the PCs are loudly insisting there is one.

From the PC candidate in the Ottawa-Vanier byelection:

Earlier this week, I received an email purporting to be from a group of Ontario Liberal Party members, past and present, calling for Wynne to resign.

The message's credibility quickly crumbled upon closer inspection.

There was no name or contact number. Nobody responded to my reply asking for an interview. It contained numerous sloppy grammatical errors and typos, referred to Hydro One as "Ontario Hydro" and spelled St. Catharines wrong.

But the final straw was the message's rant against Wynne's plan to cut hydro rates by a further 17 per cent.

The plan may indeed have some long-term negative consequences for the province, but in the short term, it can bring only political benefits for the Liberals. Knowing how intense the hydro price backlash has been, and how relieved the Liberals are that the plan could neutralize what was the hottest political issue in the province, I can't imagine any real party member would see the move as a reason to push Wynne out.

Too early for an obituary

Yes, the Liberals are jittery about polls putting them [on average 14 points behind] the Progressive Conservatives and putting Wynne's personal approval rating at near-record lows.

But polls only indicate how voters feel right now. The election is 15 months away, an eternity in politics. The Liberals were sagging at similar points ahead of the elections in 2007, 2011 and 2014 and won them all.

It's also unclear that any other leader would be able to magically produce a surge in the polls. No matter who the premier is, the party will almost certainly have to battle against sentiment that it's "time for a change" after 14 years of Liberal governments.

It's simply a little early to write Kathleen Wynne's political obituary just yet. But if you are a Liberal party member and you do want her gone, please do [let me know] that you're out there.

Ontario is lowering electricity bills by 25% on average
Wawa-news.com
2017-03-10

Ontario is lowering electricity bills by 25% on average for all residential customers and half a million farms and businesses, as part of a significant system restructuring that will address long-standing policy challenges and ensure greater fairness.

Starting this summer, Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan would provide households with this 25% break. Many small businesses and farms in northeastern Ontario would also benefit from the initiative. People with low incomes and those living in eligible rural communities would receive even greater reductions to their electricity bills. As part of this plan, rate increases over the next four years would be held to the rate of inflation for everyone.

These measures include the 8% rebate introduced in January and build on previously announced initiatives to deliver broad-based rate relief on all electricity bills.

Taken together, these changes will deliver the single-largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario’s history.

Recently, electricity rates have risen for two key reasons:

- Decades of under-investment in the electricity system by governments of all stripes resulted in the need to invest more than $50 billion in generation, transmission and distribution assets to ensure the system is clean and reliable.
- The decision to eliminate Ontario’s use of coal and produce clean, renewable power, as well as policies put in place to provide targeted support to rural and low-income customers, have created additional costs.

The burden of financing these system improvements and funding these key programs has unfairly fallen almost entirely on the shoulders of today's ratepayers. To relieve that burden and share costs more fairly, two system fixes are being undertaken.

Recognizing that the electricity infrastructure that has been built will last for many decades to come, the province would refinance those capital investments to ensure that system costs are more equitably distributed over time. In addition, a number of important programs, such as the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), will now be funded by the government instead of by ratepayers.

The province will also launch a new Affordability Fund, enhance the existing OESP and Rural or Remote Rate Protection (RRRP) program and provide on-reserve First Nations households with a delivery credit. These new measures will cost the government up to $2.5 billion over the next three years.

Notwithstanding that hydro rate relief costs will add significant pressure on the fiscal framework, the province continues to project a balanced budget for 2017-18, and will provide a full update on its fiscal plan in the spring budget.

Reducing electricity costs in Sault Ste. Marie is part of Ontario's plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

"Electricity costs rose sharply and residents and business owners in northern Ontario spoke out. They told us the government needed to do more to reduce the costs and make hydro more affordable. By fixing problems in the system, Ontario is lowering electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential customers and ensuring rates are fairer in the future.", Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy.

- Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan would improve sector efficiency and modernize the province's electricity market, working in collaboration with the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and the Ontario Energy Board (OEB).
- The Province will expand the RRRP to provide distribution charge relief to additional customers served by LDCs with the highest rates. About 800,000 customers would benefit from the enhanced RRRP program.
- The Affordability Fund would be accessible to Local Distribution Companies (LDCs) for customers who do not qualify for low-income conservation programs and who are unable to undertake energy efficiency improvements without financial assistance.
- On-reserve First Nations customers will receive a 100 per cent credit of the delivery line on their monthly electricity bills.
- The expanded OESP will provide an additional $180 to $276 per year for households of eligible size and combined income.
- Ontario is expanding the Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI) program by reducing the threshold from 1 MW to 500 kW and targeting more small manufacturing and industrial consumers.
- In 2016, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), in partnership with the Ontario Chamber Network launched a campaign titled, *Small Business Too Big To Ignore*. The campaign highlighted the important contributions of small businesses and investigated the top barriers to small business growth,

one example being the cost of electricity.

FortisOntario Inc. Completes Transaction to Increase its Investment in Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project
Marketwired
Fri Mar 10 2017

TORONTO, ONTARIO—(Marketwired - March 10, 2017) - Wataynikaneyap Power LP is pleased to announce that FortisOntario Inc. ("FortisOntario") through its parent company Fortis Inc. has completed the transaction to increase its share in the ownership of the transmission partnership by acquiring the interest of Renewable Energy Systems Canada Inc. (RES). As a result of this increased investment, Fortis's equity in the Limited Partnership has increased to 49%, while the 22 First Nations communities will continue to hold the remaining 51% interest.

"We are very excited to announce we have received approval from the Ontario Energy Board and have completed this transaction to increase Fortis's investment in this important project," said Scott Hawkes, President and CEO of FortisOntario, and President of Wataynikaneyap Power.

"Fortis continues to demonstrate its commitment to the project through this increased participation," says Margaret Kenequanash, Executive Director of Shibogama First Nations Council, and Chair of Wataynikaneyap Power. "At the same time, our partnership allows the First Nations to remain majority owners in the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project and ensure that our communities benefit."

The Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project will reinforce the existing transmission grid to Pickle Lake. Connections to the Remote Communities will expand grid service north of Pickle Lake and Red Lake to 17 remote First Nations communities. Wataynikaneyap has advanced engineering, permitting, and completed several rounds of engagement with potentially impacted communities, and further engagement will continue. Construction is currently planned to start in 2018; however, firm government funding commitments and various approvals are required.

Innisfil residents ready to revolt against InnPower rate increase
Innisfil Journal
Fri Mar 10 2017
Section: News
Byline: Janis Ramsay

Plenty of angry Innisfil residents were on hand for two public meetings for InnPower's request to raise distribution rates.

The energy corporation is requesting an increase which would raise the average monthly bill by about $8.59.

"We don't have a large enough customer base to pay for an increase," Cookstown resident Bruce Currie said at the first meeting, held at Innisfil town hall. "It's time to revolt the volt (business). I'm tired of the increases we're facing."

The crowd of more than 100 people applauded his statement.

"When you hear of the salaries the top echelon is making, there's too much of an imbalance."

Other residents were critical of the new 41,802 square-foot InnPower building, which opened at 7251 Yonge St. in January 2015.

Patrick Morley was one of them.

"In 2016, I was in the home of people who were experiencing a hard time and had fallen behind in their electricity payment," Morley said.

An InnPower employee visited the home to shut off the power, but Morley offered to pay the bill immediately and drove to InnPower's new office.

"I was completely gobsmacked when I saw the building. It looked more like a place that would be suited for a city like New York or even Toronto," Morley said. "Why on earth would a town, even with an expanded population, require a massive building like this?"

InnPower CEO Wally Malcolm said he is in negotiations with a company to rent out the upper two floors, about 3,000 square feet, and it should be occupied by June.

Malcolm said the high cost of providing energy is mainly because of Innisfil's geography, with many rural customers.

"It's why our rates are different than an urban area similar to Vaughan," Malcolm said. "Even though we have the same area, we see a vast difference between the town and Mississauga."

He added InnPower is simply providing service to customers.

"We are aligning with what you are expecting. You want energy when you turn your light switch on and want to cook meals."

He repeated $677,000 was cut from InnPower's operating, maintenance and administration budget and $3.8 million was cut from the capital budget this year.

But residents are still concerned the rate increase will be too much, making it even more challenging to make ends meet.

However, he said the energy corporation is also seeking an extra $276,045 payout from the ice storm of March 2016.

Other residents questioned why InnPower wasn't part of the PowerStream merger.

“There was a balance between wanting a local distribution company where you have a say, or passing those decisions on elsewhere,” Malcolm said.

Ontario Energy Board (OEB) spokesperson Ted Antonopoulos his goal is to protect customers while keeping a reliable energy system going.

He said power utilities could apply to the OEB for an increase every five years, but it might not be approved retroactive to Jan. 1, 2017 as requested. Antonopoulos added a Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Plan is in the works by the province, which could relieve some InnPower customers.

Water Wells First Ramps Up Pressure On Wind Developers
Blackburnnews.com
2017-03-12
Byline: PAUL PEDRO

Water Wells First has begun monitoring wells in Dover Centre.

Group Spokesperson Kevin Jakubec says the new monitoring stations will take readings of water turbidity and wind speed and will help them track the patterns of a nearby wind farm in hopes of stopping projects in North Kent and Otter Creek.

Jakubec wants wind farms in North Kent and Otter Creek stopped until the monitoring and investigation is complete in Dover.

He says Dover residents drink water at their own risk.

“It’s a way now of starting to look for patterns and walk back this problem from the crown acquifer back to vibration sources,” says Jakubec.

Jakubec says the cost of, what he calls, turbid well water caused by wind tower vibrations is starting to pile up.

He says total cost of the monitoring equipment is around $15,000.

That’s on top of testing being done by well owners at a cost of $2,000 each test.

Jakubec says all the money comes from public donations.

He hopes nearby wind farm developers will also conduct monitoring.

“Have we stirred up this acquifer so much with vibration that we can’t fix it and we have stirred it up for generations,” Jakubec says and adds “that’s why we have taken the position do not construct North Kent-1 and do not construct Otter Creek until we have fully investigated Dover first”.

He thinks more than 20 wells are affected in Dover.

Efficiency motivates OPG; North Bay jobs being transferred to 'save money on ratepayers' bills'
North Bay Nugget
Sat Mar 11 2017
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Jennifer Hamilton-Mccharles

Ontario Power Generation's operation in North Bay wasn't delivering the best value for Ontario ratepayers, and that is why the regional office will close within a year, OPG says.

Kelly Neal, OPG's director of media and communications, said the decision to transfer staff from North Bay was studied thoroughly ultimately made in order to achieve benefits for electricity ratepayers.

He said the 66 staff in North Bay oversee 126 MW of power generation.

"Our other four regional offices oversee much bigger operations. Eastern operations manages over 4,000 MW, Northeast in Timmins manages over 1,000 MW, Northwest manages over 1,000 MW and Niagara manages over 2,000 MW.

"By transferring personnel to other locations, we will be able to increase efficiency in our operations and save money on ratepayers' bills. It's important to note that these jobs will be relocated, not eliminated," he said Friday.

"OPG takes personnel decisions very seriously, and any changes are carefully considered. It's important that we remain vigilant in lowering costs, while providing safe, clean power for the people of the province."

Neal said OPG recognizes the decision is difficult for staff and the community.

"Our priority is to treat OPG staff fairly in accordance with collective agreements."

Allan Reid, chief operating officer with renewal generation and power marketing at OPG, made the announcement to staff Monday.

The control room in North Bay is moving to Timmins, which will impact 20 employees. A further 20 employees in support, engineering and finance will have an opportunity to be transferred to another OPG operation in the province.

The remaining 26 will remain in North Bay to maintain and operate the water control equipment.

In a previous interview, Reid said the company had been studying the change for years.

Lloyd Robertson Moderates DGR Talk
Blackburnnews.com
2017-03-11
Byline: ADAM BELL

Supporters and opponents of a proposed Deep Geologic Repository by Ontario Power Generation voiced their views in Kincardine Friday night.

CTV's Lloyd Robertson moderated the discussion at the Royal Canadian Legion and will be part of an upcoming "W5" program.

Charles Hazel is a board member with "Save Saugeen Shores" and says a lot of differing opinions were brought to the forum.

"It's the best of what we do in Canada. To participate in something that is of national significance," says Hazel.

During his time at microphone, Hazel preached a cautious approach to a project so large.

Lise Morton, vice-president of OPG's Nuclear Waste Division, says a lot of the same statements were brought up during this meeting that have already been heard before.

"I would hope we have been able to reaffirm and confirm for people the extent of the scientific study that we have completed for the project. And that we are certainly keeping the safety case at the top of the entire project, says Morton. "We would not proceed with this project if it was not safe."

Kincardine's mayor was also present at Friday night's forum. She says the program will show how much the project matters to residents in nearby municipalities.

Eadie didn't take to the microphone but gave a short speech just as the event was wrapping up.

"I thought the dicussion was excellent," says Eadie. "It shows all of the expertise we have in our nuclear community. I think it shows how passionate we are here in the Municipality of Kincardine about our Lake Huron."

At the end of the night, Lloyd Robertson says because people were so vocal about this issue during the review process, it's finally breaking through to the bigger picture of International News.

"Certainly we do understand that the people here feel so strongly about it," says Robertson. "A lot of them have worked very hard on both sides to make the case to the public."

The program will air Saturday, April 1st at 7:00pm.

Union Gas Still Investigating Impact Of Cap And Trade
Blackburnnews.com
2017-03-12
Byline: JOSH BOYCE

Union Gas says it's still trying to gauge the impact of the newly implemented cap and trade program on home owners and businesses in Sarnia-Lambton.

The program was put in place by the Ontario Liberals in January in an effort to lower emmisions.

There's now a cap on how many tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution a company can emit. They can then trade for credits with companies that are under the limit.

Union Gas President Steve Baker says there are still a lot of questions surrounding cap and trade.

"We're getting a lot of questions from businesses in terms of what is the cost of cap and trade," says Baker. "It's not shown seperately on our bills, it's included within our delivery charges so businesses are asking us what the cap and trade cost is. The second question is, how can I be more efficient and reduce my consumption."

Baker says it's important Ontario remains competive with businesses in the United States.

He says Union Gas offers a number of energy efficiency programs to help businesses reduce consumption and the impact of cap and trade.

Don't be fooled by hydro 'scheme,' PCs says
Minden Times
2017-03-11

Byline: Chad Ingram

Ontario's Progressive Conservative party has long been callling on the Liberal government to decrease the price of electricity in the province and while the government has announced it will cut residential Hydro One bills by 25 per cent, the Opposition says the method through which that reduction is being offered is a shell game that will cost Onatarians more in the long run.

After introducing an eight per cent rebate on Hydro One bills at the beginning of this year through the removal of provincial sales tax, on March 2, the government announced it would make further reductions, for an overall average decrease of 25 per cent on residential Hydro One bills.

"Starting this summer, Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan would provide households with this 25 per cent break," reads a release from the province. "Many small businesses and farms would also benefit from the initiative. People with low incomes and those living in eligible rural communities would receive even greater reductions to their electricity bills. As part of this plan, rate increases over the next four years would be held to the rate of inflation for everyone."

The price of electricity in Ontario has more than doubled since in the past decade, from 8.7 cents per kilowatt hour during “peak” periods in late 2007 to 18 cents during peak hours today.

According to the government, the two main reasons for the huge jump in electricity prices are “decades of under-investment in the electricity system by governments of all stripes,” which resulted in the need for $50 billion in investment in new generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure, and “the decision to eliminate Ontario’s use of coal and produce clean, renewable power, as well as policies put in place to provide targeted support to rural and low-income customers, have created additional costs.”
Ontario ended the operation of coal-powered production plants in 2014.

The province’s opposition parties say the reason for Ontario having some of the highest electricity rates in the world is due to 14 years of mismanagement by the Liberal government and the signing of numerous contracts under its feed-in tariff (FIT) program which largely overvalued the price paid to energy producers.

Most of the price reduction being offered to Ontarians is coming from a refinancing of the province’s utility debt. While that refinancing will cut repayment costs by $2.5 billion a year during the next 10 years, it is expected to add $25 billion in interest costs during the next 30.
Rural Ontarians, who generally make less money than their urban counterparts, have been crying foul over Hydro One bills for years, since high “delivery charges” can sometimes constitute up to half a household bill.
“Over the past eight years, skyrocketing hydro rates have dominated the work of my constituency office,” Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott said in a relaese last week. “ The energy poverty caused by this government is out of control, with seniors and working families in my riding being forced to make the impossible choice between heating their homes and putting food on the table.”

“Instead of providing real relief to rural Ontarians, the Wynne government’s electricity plan will only burden future generations with the cost of their terrible policies,” the release reads. “Ontarians will be on the hook for an extra $25 billion in interest payments for the cost of electricity over 30 years, all in a ploy to save them from electoral defeat.”

Ontarians head to the polls in 2018.

Brace yourself; still a long way to go

The Barrie Examiner
2017-03-11

And it’s going to be this way until June 2018.

That’s when the next Ontario election is scheduled to take place.

Last week, the issue was cutting high hydro costs.

This week, it’s school closures.

For whatever reason, it would seem that Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown is setting the agenda – or at least more than an Official Opposition boss should.

Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a further 17% cut this summer in residential/small-business hydro rates, after shaving 8% off Jan. 1.

Brown, along with New Democratic Party leader Andrea Horwath, didn’t like this one bit – because the savings allowing it happen will be found by financing the costs of electricity generation contracts during longer periods of time.

Which will cost Ontario taxpayers about $40 billion in interest costs during the next 30 years, the opposition says.

And produce another line on hydro bills.

Despite the PCs not having their own plan yet – Brown says it’s coming soon – and the NDP having one with 30% savings, Wynne really didn’t have an answer.

Other than hydro rates are too high and people can’t afford them.

This week it’s school closures, which Barrie residents know all too well, having lost Barrie Central Collegiate, Prince of Wales School and King Edward Public School.

Brown demanded a moratorium vote on school closures in the legislature, citing a flawed provincial formula that education boards only get new capital funding if they close schools.

Fair point, but what really irks parents and students of schools which close is they have no say.

The accommodation review committee (ARC) process is little more than lip service.

The proof is that more than 330 schools have been closed under the watch of Wynne and former premier Dalton McGuinty.

In the same breath, about 600 Ontario schools are at less than half capacity.

Do taxpayers really think that an efficient use of their dollars?

Education is a motherhood issue, which Brown knows. So is keeping the lights on.

The PC leader must also know, or he's being told, that the Liberals are on the ropes. So he's going to keep on swinging.

The problem for voters is that Brown, and Horwath, can't do anything about Liberal policy right now. Wynne has a majority government, and June 2018 isn't just around the corner.

But it's going to be this way, anyway.

Pay less, own more
Orillia Packet & Times
2017-03-11
Byline: Elizabeth Van Houtte Opinion

Re: **"PC hydro plan coming 'soon,'"** March 4 Could it be that MPP Patrick Brown contributed yet another sleight-of-hand assertion, this time to distract you from the absence of a Tory **Hydro One** plan? **"I think the NDP and Liberals were in damage control on this file,"** Brown said. **"That's why they came up with these schemes, because it's about their own political survival and we're looking at pretty ugly polling numbers. But ultimately this is a mess they own."**

In reality, the privatization of hydro and other public assets was started under Mike Harris and shifted into high gear by McGuinty and Wynne. The MPP's **accusations** seem conveniently out of place.

I await the plan from the PC leadership. The Grits have already presented their election-season curtsy to Ontarians: a proposal which will require our children and grandchildren to pay for the Liberals' fiscal games. Reducing **"power poverty"** somehow seems outside the capacity of the Grits or the Tories.

Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP have placed a **clear** and thoughtful plan on the table - openly, for all to see. No whistles and bells - no distracting slams against the opposition.

The ONDP plan to cut hydro prices shows that Ontarians can take back hydro production and the millions in revenues it generates instead of those revenues going to private shareholders. It shows how, by using the receipts from the remaining publicly owned portion of **Hydro One**, we can buy the outstanding private shares and return those dividends to the public coffer, where they belong. More importantly, this process will take a mere eight years and, significantly, will not cost a dime in additional debt for our children and grandchildren. Once complete, Ontario will again see publicly controlled dividends grow in the range of $1 billion to $4 billion annually and more.

Other points in the plan **include** immediate elimination of **"time of usage"** constraints, immediate change so rural customers save 15% by paying the same delivery rates as urban customers, immediate removal of the 8% provincial portion of HST, negotiations with Ottawa to remove all of the federal portion of HST, and contractual revisions to end the practice of paying for unused power currently subsidized on your hydro bill.

It is easy to see the NDP has the first realistic and achievable solution to **"power poverty"** in Ontario.

Elizabeth Van Houtte

President, ONDP Simcoe North