Ministry of Energy Top Issues - March 15, 2017

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Date: Wed, 15 Mar 2017 07:00:11 -0400

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

- Ontarians support hydro rate cut, poll shows; While 82 per cent approve, many remain worried about effect on future generation -- The Toronto Star
- Queen's researchers share $4.5 million -- Kingston Whig-Standard
- No layoffs sparked: SAH; NDP contends high hydro bills yield hospital job losses -- The Sault Star
- North Bay to Cut Jobs Due to Rising Costs -- Source: MCTV
- Hydro killing hospitals says MPP | 'Hospitals are going to be faced with no other option but to cut staff as electricity rates continue to soar' -- Bay Today
- Energy minister weighs in on provincial hydro bill plan | A plan for fairer hydro bills -- Manitoulin Expositor
- Premier Wynne Defends Hydro Plan During Stop in Barrie -- Source: CKVR
- Wynne defends government's plan to lower hydro rates during Barrie stop -- CTV News
- Wynne and cheese at downtown Barrie shop -- The Barrie Examiner
- Hydro savings coming to Oshawa | Premier confirms local utilities like OPUC fall under new directive – The Oshawa Express
- Hydro consumers on First Nations won't be charged for delivery fee -- Manitoulin Expositor
- How Premier Kathleen Wynne Became The Least Popular Premier In Canada -- Toronto Sun
- Brown's accusations 'out of place' -- The Barrie Examiner
- Andrea Horwath reacts to Ross Romano's comments -- SaultOnline.com
- Sharing hydro frustrations -- Tillsonburg News
- Community energy leader at Guelph city hall loses job -- GuelphMercury.com
- Nuclear too expensive -- Sudbury Star

Ontarians support hydro rate cut, poll shows; While 82 per cent approve, many remain worried about effect on future generation
The Toronto Star
2017-03-15
Byline: Rob Ferguson Section: News Page: A4

Ontarians approve of Premier Kathleen Wynne's promised 25-per-cent hydro rate cut by a wide margin, but are split on whether the $25-billion extra cost is good for the next generation, an internal government poll suggests.

Eighty-two per cent strongly or somewhat support the price break announced two weeks ago, 14 per cent were opposed and 4 per cent had no opinion, according to results obtained Tuesday by the Star.

Another 78 per cent see the cut helping their family budget and two-thirds felt it would make their bills affordable, while 52 per cent didn't understand how the government could bankroll the measure.

The numbers came as Wynne travelled to Barrie to sell her plan, which will reduce rates starting in June, but cost $25 billion in interest payments over the next 30 years, as recent costs of modernizing the electricity system are spread over a longer time frame.

Wynne said she hopes any cynicism about the break on skyrocketing electricity charges, which have left many residents and businesses struggling, will evaporate this summer. "People don't have their bills yet," Wynne told supporters at a chocolate and cheese shop where the biggest bill the owners pay, aside from rent, is for hydro.

The premier denied that the provincial election looming in 15 months was the reason for the cut, which includes instant rebates on the 8-per-cent provincial portion of the HST which took effect in January.

"If it helps people in their day-to-day lives, then that will mean it's a success … what they feel about me or my popularity is actually beside the point," said Wynne, who is struggling in public opinion polls behind Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

"People will make a judgment about whether it's enough and you know the politics of it, but, for me, it's about actually seeing those rates go down, so that people are better off."

Results of the internal government poll, conducted with a sample size of 500 people on a rolling basis in the four days after the hydro plan's release, were presented at last week's cabinet meeting.

About 50 per cent of those surveyed expressed concerns about the $25 billion in interest costs that will burden ratepayers over the next 30 years, including children now in school.

Opposition parties have pounced on that part of the plan, saying it amounts to the Liberals penalizing the next generation for mistakes made in the last decade in revamping the electricity system.

Brown, who is yet to announce his blueprint to reduce hydro rates, has slammed the Liberal plan as "robbing Peter to pay Paul" and said deeper reforms are needed.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath has proposed cuts of 17 per cent to 30 per cent by allowing customers to opt out of time-of-use pricing, capping profits for private power producers, returning Hydro One to full public ownership and getting the federal government to scrap its 5-per-cent HST on hydro.

In response to concern over the 30 years of interest payments, Wynne said its "unfair" to make ratepayers now shoulder the full burden of changes such as closing coal-fired generating stations and more expensive forms of renewable energy that will yield benefits for decades to come.

"People won't have to disproportionately share a burden that should be spread over a longer period of time."

Among other findings in the poll, 24 per cent of respondents were not aware of the promised hydro rate cuts, one-quarter said they find today's hydro rates affordable, and 49 per cent said the plan will cause taxes to rise.

Queen's researchers share $4.5 million

Kingston Whig-Standard

Wed Mar 15 2017
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Elliot Ferguson

Science researchers across Ontario, including four at Queen's University, are to receive $77 million in provincial government funding.

Reza Moridi, Ontario's minister of research, innovation and science, was at Queen's Tuesday to announce funding for 75 projects across the province.

The funding comes from the Ontario Research Fund's Research Excellence and the Research Infrastructure programs.

"I know for researchers it is so important to find a place where your work is supported, where you have the chance to pursue your ideas and make discoveries. I see this happening at Queen's University," Moridi said.

"Ontario's future prosperity depends on people like you: people who see the world differently and people with the confidence to step into the unknown, people brave and smart enough to follow their hunches and innovate."

The provincial government's investments have made Ontario a research leader in North America, Moridi added.

Four researchers at Queen's are to share $4.5 million.

Electrical engineering professor Praveen Jain, chair of Canada Research Chair in Power Electronics, received $4 million to work on the development of small-scale, point-of-use residential solar power systems.

Jain said the research done at the university's Centre for Energy and Power Electronics Research can have applications in almost all aspects of people's lives.

"Whether it is cellphone, computer, lightbulb or airplane, we come in contact with power electronics," he said.

The development of better residential solar power systems will help reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and emission of green house gases, he added.

Jain said the research is being conducted in co-operation with other researchers at York University, Western University and University of Ottawa.

Geologist Alexander Braun is to receive $180,000 to buy a superconducting gravimeter. There are only 12 such devices in Canada and they are used to monitor fluid migration processes in oil, gas and water reservoirs and mass changes in reservoirs to help mitigate environmental hazards related to extraction.

Psychology professor Jason Gallivan is to receive $150,000 for infrastructure related to the Memory, Action and Perception Laboratory, which studies how strokes and other neurological disorder can alter perceptual, cognitive and motor-related mechanisms in the brain.

Physicist Ryan martin is to receive $250,000 to help establish a world-class facility to develop p-type point contact detectors that are used to more accurately measure interactions with difficult-to-detect particles, such as neutrinos and dark matter.

“It’s been a phenomenal couple of years for research in Ontario and particularly for us here at Queen’s,” said Queen’s principal Daniel Woolf.

“All over this campus, Queen’s researchers are helping to address crucial issues, such as renewable energy development. All of these are of strategic value to both the province and to the public good .”

In total, the Ontario Research Funding has invested almost $700 million to support research in 198 projects and more than $959 million in research infrastructure.

No layoffs sparked: SAH; NDP contends high hydro bills yield hospital job losses

The Sault Star
Wed Mar 15 2017
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Elaine Della-Mattia

Sault Area Hospital says while electricity costs have risen by about $900,000 over the past five years, those increases have not resulted in layoffs at the hospital.

The hospital’s manager of communications Brandy Sharp Young took exception to Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath’s suggestion that the two issues are connected.

"SAH is challenged annually to find efficiency improvements in our operations due to many factors such as the impacts of health-system funding reform, zero to minimal increases in hospital funding over the last several years, compensation increasing and increasing electrical rates," she said in an email.

She said SAH "has not made decisions directly tied to the increase in electricity rates . There are no planned layoffs of frontline staff at SAH."

On Monday, Horwath was in Sault Ste. Marie claiming the Liberal government has not done enough to stop rising electricity costs.

She said soaring energy bills are negatively impacting the province's health-care system.

Young said SAH, along with other Ontario hospitals and the Ontario Hospital Association, are working on a provincial approach to address cost pressures facing health care in Ontario.

Meanwhile, Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault also weighed in on the subject, calling the NDP hydro plan "short on details and long on hollow promises."

He said that many of their proposals "rely on a vague and yet-tobe-determined 'expert panel' that will be convened in the future as well as pie-in-the-sky negotiations with the federal government."

Buying back Hydro One will cost the province more money and not result in energy bill savings, and cancelling the time of using pricing would dial back conservation savings, he said.

Earlier this month, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a plan that will slash rates by about 25 per cent for all users, the largest cut ever in hydro rates in the province.

In addition, increases would be limited to the cost of inflation for the next four years. That plan was achieved by refinancing the cost of upgrades to the generation system over a longer period of time.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said his plan will be released in the near future, but dismisses Wynne's plan as setting a "low bar" for savings.

He did not specify what types of savings or reduction in rates his plan with hold for Ontarians, but said it will address the structural issues.

North Bay to Cut Jobs Due to Rising Costs

Source: MCTV

Mar 14, 2017 6: 05 PM

Anchor: There's news out of North Bay that another 30 to 40 jobs are about to be lost at the local hospital. That's in addition to about 350 lost over the last three years. CTV's Joey Slattery has more on the reasons for these cuts.

Reporter: As the fiscal year draws to a close, The North Bay Regional Health Centre says rising costs forcing the hospital to come up with another $5 million in the 2017-18 budget.

Paul Heinrich, North Bay Regional Health Centre CEO: The challenge that we have this year is the increased cost of arbitrated wage increases as well as the cost of the benefit coverage, particularly long-term disability. There's a significant increase in the carrier. Then the cost of our utilities, including power is going up once again.

Reporter: Heinrich say there's been increasing pressure for hospitals across the province to do more with less.

Heinrich: Particularly in North Bay, we've been through such dramatic change. It's been extremely hard on the staff here. First of all, the change, fatigue and the amount of work that's left over after we do reduce the number of positions.

Reporter: Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli says even with recent changes to hydro billing, hospitals like the one in North Bay will continue to struggle and he feels for the people involved.

Vic Fedeli, PC MPP: These are families whose lives are being affected. You've got to acknowledge that the mistakes you've made in the past are now causing this and you've got to address the hydro. None of the changes that Kathleen Wynne is talking about with hydro will help the hospital mind you.

Heinrich: We're the safety net for the whole health system. We're 24 hours a day, every day of the year and we're an essential service that can't say "No." When there's pressures in the rest of the health system, we actually feel it at the hospital level as well.

Reporter: Heinrich says three management positions have already been eliminated as part of this latest cut and he's hopeful with early retirement and natural turnover that actual job loss can be kept to a minimum. It's expected to take four to six months before the changes are in full effect.

Hydro killing hospitals says MPP | 'Hospitals are going to be faced with no other option but to cut staff as electricity rates continue to soar'
Bay Today
2017-03-14

Hospitals across the province are being forced to cut jobs to pay for increasing hydro bills says Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli.

“The Wynne Liberals have created a hydro crisis in Ontario where our hydro bills are the fastest rising in North America. This is hurting hospitals across Ontario,” said Fedeli. “But, the Wynne Liberals’ expensive hydro band-aid does absolutely nothing to reduce the cost of electricity for hospitals. Electricity bills are going to continue to soar and nurses and front-line staff will be let go.”

Fedeli's comments come in response to news that the North Bay Regional Hospital is cutting 30-40 more staff members, partly because of increased energy costs. The hospital doesn’t qualify for the new hydro rebate.

It will bring to almost 400, the number of lost jobs at the facility in the past few years.

“Our hospitals are being forced to do more with less. For years they’ve been forced to deal with Wynne Liberal cuts and now they’re being forced to pay for Wynne Liberal

mismanagement of the electricity sector," added Fedeli. "Hospitals are going to be faced with no other option but to cut staff as electricity rates continue to soar. These cuts will be Premier Kathleen Wynne's legacy."

Fedeli gives these examples of other northern hospitals.

- *** The Sault Area Hospital's electricity bills have increased by $800,000 or 45% over a four year period. In 2015, the Sault Area Hospital was forced to cut 35 positions.**

- **The Timmins and District Hospital is expecting to pay $1.2 million on hydro this year. Five years ago the hospital was paying $825,000 a year on hydro. This represents an increase of $375,000 a year. In 2014, the Timmins and District Hospital was forced to cut 40 jobs.**

- **·The Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) in Barrie is expecting a $200,000 increase in their energy bill. RVH has been forced to cut staff positions a number of times over the last couple of years, including the elimination of 56 full-time positions in 2016.**

"Energy rates will keep rising in Ontario because the Wynne Liberals are dedicated to signing more expensive wind and solar power contracts despite a surplus energy problem we are facing in our province," adds Fedeli. "In fact, the Liberals accepted over 1,100 new applications this month for more expensive wind and solar power projects. It's having a devastating impact on all Ontarians, including our hospitals."

Fedeli promises the Ontario PCs will immediately put a stop to the signing of more contracts.

Energy minister weighs in on provincial hydro bill plan | A plan for fairer hydro bills
Manitoulin Expositor
2017-03-15
Byline: Glenn Thibeault

On March 2, Premier Wynne announced a plan that will lower residential hydro bills by an average of 25 percent starting this summer. This significant reduction in rates will go to every household in Ontario with no asterisks, loop holes 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 (RRRP). 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

Minister of Energy

Premier Wynne Defends Hydro Plan During Stop in Barrie

Source: CKVR

Mar 14, 2017 6: 03 PM

Anchor: Ontario's high hydro rates were front and centre in Barrie again today. Premier Kathleen Wynne made a campaign-style stop in the city to defend her government's plan to cut bills. But she found some sceptics even among friends. Live to CTV's Heather Butts who was with the Premier today.

Reporter: The Premier made visit to fine cheese and chocolate shop in Barrie this morning to talk about the issue that could very well decide the provincial election next year. The Premier did not have to look any further than owner of this small business to hear about high hydro bills.

Jessi Fournier, J'Adore Fine Cheese & Chocolate: It is our second largest bill next to the rent and so, that is expense that every month we cringe at.

Reporter: Surrounded by treats, she defended the promise to cut bills by another 17 percent. But some say making future generations pay for it is not a sweet deal.

Bekki Martin, J'Adore Fine Cheese & Chocolate: It is nice to get a rebate, but being a young mother of young family, I also know they will be paying for it, right? So I don't know how fair it is, but to be honest, what's the solution?

Reporter: The Premier feels it is fair trade-off.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I am quite comfortable saying to my grandkids, who are seven, five and three, you know, in order for mommy and daddy to be able to do the things that they want to be able to do with you now, that means that when you are their age you will paying a little bit too for this clean electricity grid we have.

Reporter: Some say Wynne in Barrie shopping for votes, not chocolate or cheese. This political analyst thinks visiting PC Leader Patrick Brown's backyard is a statement to voters and her own party.

Unidentified: To show that she's already in campaign mode and she is ready to go in the next election and so mainly, she's trying to convince her fellow Liberals as she is trying to convince people that may or may not vote for her.

Reporter: The Premier says she is just trying get the job done, but with an election looming?

Premier Wynne: There will always be a political context. I am a politician and we are elected office. That's the reality. But, this issue of electricity price – this is a fairness issue.

Anchor: Heather Butts is live with us now. Heather, the Progressive Conservatives were quick to attack the Premier for not doing anything about hospital hydro rates and I know you asked her about that too.

Reporter: I did, Tony. She wouldn't talk specifically about hydro expenses at hospitals, but she admitted there's a need to improve health care funding in a broader sense and says we can expect to hear more about that in the spring budget next month.

Wynne defends government's plan to lower hydro rates during Barrie stop
CTV News
2017-03-14
Byline: Adam Ward, CTV Barrie

Premier Kathleen Wynne says her government's plan to reduce hydro rates isn't a campaign booster, but rather a solution to a "fairness issue".

Wynne made the comments during a media event at J'adore Fine Cheese and Chocolate Shop in downtown Barrie on Tuesday morning.

The premier says people haven't seen their bills yet, so judgments are being made before reductions are seen.

"This issue of electricity prices, this is a fairness issue. This is making sure people don't have to disproportionately bear a burden that should be spread over a longer period of time."

"What they think about me is beside the point. What's important is that they can pay their bills and they can look after their kids and they can run their businesses. That's what's important."

Earlier this month the province announced the Fair Hydro Plan, which promises to lower the average ratepayer's hydro bill by an additional 17 per cent.

However, the plan means ratepayers will ultimately be on the hook in the long run. That's because Ontario has long-term contracts with electricity generators. This means Ontarians could be paying $1.4 billion a year in extra interest payments over 10 years.

"I'm quite comfortable saying to my grandkids, who are seven and five and three, that in order for mommy and daddy to do the things that they want to be able to do with you now, that means when you're there age, you're going to be paying a little bit too for this clean electricity grid that we have."

Wynne added that this plan "evens out the cost" by putting it out over several years.

Along with residents, business owners and even hospital officials have expressed concern and frustration over hydro rates.

J'adore owner Bekki Martin says the hydro bill is the second highest her business has. The shop has coolers and air conditioning that chomp away at her bottom line, and she

believes the bill is just going to get higher.

"It's kind of our wow moment. We see the 8 per cent rebate, which is nice relief, but every two months we do our HST returns, and we get that 8 per cent back. So when Wynne announces a 25 per cent, I'm really only going to see that 17 kick back."

Martin says while the rebate is nice, she says it's not fair that her children will have to pay for it.

"I don't want them to pay anything growing up. I invest so they don't have to. I don't know what that bill is going to look like then, in 30 years, but it will probably be solved, I hope."

Ontarians can expect to see that 17 per cent reduction in the summer.

Wynne and cheese at downtown Barrie shop
The Barrie Examiner
2017-03-14
Byline: Cheryl Browne

Tucked in behind the coolers stuffed with 150 exotic cheeses is the $800 hydro bill to keep those freezers and the chocolate tempering machine running.

When Premier Kathleen Wynne dropped in to the J'Adore Fine Cheese & Chocolate shop on Dunlop St. East Tuesday morning, the fresh scent of chocolate, as well as sheep and goat cheeses assailed her senses.

"This is the kind of business that builds community. The cheese and chocolate are amazing, j'adore," Wynne said, standing in the SpeakCheesy or basement and tasting rooms of the shop.

Addressing cheese and chocolate shop owners, Bekki Martin and Jessi Fournier, Wynne turned her attention to the reason for her visit.

"You told me your hydro bill is your second highest bill after your rent, and then you said, every bill is a challenge for an entrepreneur when they come in," Wynne said. "What we've heard over the last number of months and years is that there are challenges that are being faced by businesses like yours, by farms, by residents, that are seeing their hydro bills go up at a rate or a pace that's too fast for you to keep up with and too high."

After speaking with Martin and Fournier about the intricacies of monitoring air conditioning for the chocolate, as well as heat in a room with four cheese coolers, she said she could appreciate the specific electrical requirements of the chocolate and cheese shop.

“So what we hope is that the 25% reduction in your electricity bill will help, and it will allow you a bit more flexibility so that your business can grow,” Wynne said.

Wynne spoke about the $50 billion investment the government has made to ensure Ontario has a clean and reliable electricity grid, and how those fees have left many small businesses and residents facing expensive bills.

“And what we determined was that we need to spread those costs over a longer period of time. Instead of a 20-year mortgage for example, we’re looking at 30-years and asking that the generation that comes next – that will use the assets we’ve invested in – to also take part in paying for those,” she said.

Additional reductions in energy charges will be made for Innisfil customers using Innpower, whose distribution rates are “disproportionally high” she said, as well as expanding the electricity-bill support for low-income consumers.

Martin and Fournier moved into their new location at 123 Dunlop St. West last September after running their shop for more than a year in a store-front three doors down.

Fournier said they had installed a high-efficiency air-conditioner and use LED lights wherever possible.

But expanding the store to include the SpeakCheesy wine and cheese tasting rooms in the basement and adding a patio in the rear of the building (facing the lake) were expensive expansions.

“Hydro costs are scary,” said Martin and Fournier added, “As a small business owner, you feel every bill. When you have a slow month, you still have to keep those fridges running.”

A little closer to the Five-Points, Don Kellett of Donaleigh’s Irish Public House said he took advantage of a retrofit through PowerStream to offset his electricity bills.

“We were the first business to sign up for the energy refit program,” Kellet said. “PowerStream came in and changed all our lightbulbs to energy efficient ones, as well as swapped out all the motors on all our compressors in fridges and freezes with newer, more efficient motors.”

Kellet said he can't give a dollar figure of how much money the bar saved, but said there has been a "noticeable difference."

Joining Wynne and Barrie MPP Ann Hoggarth at J'Adore was the new president and CEO of the newly-formed Alectra electricity company, Brian Bentz.

He spoke about the merger of Barrie Hydro that brought about PowerStream and with it, annual savings of $100/year for consumers in 2013.

The latest amalgamation of municipal hydro utilities including Barrie, parts of Simcoe County, York Region, Hamilton, Mississauga, St. Catharines and Brampton, is the second largest municipally-owned consortium in North America, he said.

"Our new company is really all about value for customers," Bentz said. "The goal is be customer focused. We're in a changing world of energy. We want to provide new, innovative, faster, better, more reliable electricity solutions for customers and we are committed to doing that."

The 25% reduction to energy costs won't just be felt by small business owners and residents.

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) spends approximately $3.4 million on electricity each year to run its HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), diagnostic equipment, cancer treatment accelerators and lighting, etc.

With the 25% reduction, RVH would save more than three-quarters of a million dollars.

"We had anticipated a 4% to 6 % increase in those costs, but with a 25% hydro rate cut, we could realize a savings of $850,000 over the year," said Rob Purdy, RVH's operations director of facilities support services.

Hydro savings coming to Oshawa | Premier confirms local utilities like OPUC fall under new directive
The Oshawa Express
2017-03-15
Byline: Joel Wittnebe

Whether you pay your bill to Hydro One or to the Oshawa Power and Utilities Corporation, Premier Kathleen Wynne stresses that everyone will be seeing some relief as a result of the Liberal's plan to slash hydro rates by as much as 25 per cent.

The new plan, announced earlier this month, will see the Liberal government refinancing approximately $28 billion in project costs over the next decade in order to stretch out the payments and give Ontarians relief on their hydro bills.

The reduction includes the eight-per-cent cut that came into effect on Jan. 1 when the provincial government announced it would be cutting its portion of the HST from electricity bills.

And while the remaining 17 per cent is set to come into effect this summer, the plan has drawn the ire of critics who claim the plan is only pushing the costs for hydro on to future generations. However, for Wynne, this is the only fair way to do it.

"We knew that rising hydro bills had hit household budgets very, very hard and that hydro rates had gone up too far and too quickly, and that was the unfair situation that we were dealing with, people's bills were unfairly increasing and so we're fixing it," she said during a media roundtable at Queen's Park.

"We were basically asking today's generation to pay all of the costs, or pay the majority of those costs upfront, and what that meant was that they were paying for past neglect and they were also paying for future usage of that infrastructure and that wasn't right."

The interest for refinancing the projects could be as much as $25 billion over the next 30 years, but for Wynne, the new plan will have everyone paying their fair share.

"We shouldn't be asking a senior on fixed income to pay a premium today so that in 20 years, a family can pay less," she says. "It needed to be more evenly distributed across the generation."

The premier said the government will be working closely with local hydro providers to ensure the reductions are felt across the province.

“We’ll be working with all the distribution companies in the province. This isn’t just about Hydro One, this is everybody in the province,” she says.

In terms of the reductions, the refinancing plan will result in the reduction of the global adjustment charges, which have recently drawn the attention of many municipalities facing rising hydro costs.

Wynne says the reduction is “built on real structural change in the system,” and the new plan will see rates rise only by the rate of inflation over the next two years.

For Mayor John Henry, the announcement is a good thing, but there is a lot more that needs to be done.

“I’m happy to hear that they’ve recognized the challenge that has been created by the cost of hydro in this province,” he says.

“This is a start, but more needs to be done. We need to deal with the issues of peak energy, time of use, we need to make sure that our manufacturers are competitive with our neighbouring provinces and the United States. We have to be on the same playing field in order to create the jobs and the economy that we should be able to have.”

And not only that, but Henry says there needs to be further relief and the hydro issue has trickled down and caused a series of other issues in the community.

“Hydro challenges are causing a lot of the other challenges as it relates to social housing,” Henry says.

“If they’re going to do this, they need to have it flow through to the end user – it can’t just be a cash grab for people who rent buildings. So they have a lot of work to do with this, and I’m happy they’ve started, but I have high expectations that they’re going to do more so that we can help the residents.”

Hydro consumers on First Nations won’t be charged for delivery fee
Manitoulin Expositor
2017-03-15
Byline: Michael Erskine

TORONTO—News that First Nations community residents will be exempted from delivery charges on their electricity bills as part of Premier Kathleen Wynne’s recently announced plan for electricity relief is being greeted with delight by First Nation leaders.

“It’s excellent news,” declared Anishinaabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee, contacted as he was taking in a hockey game at the Little NHL Tournament in Mississauga.

“I have to commend our negotiating team, folks like (Six Nations of the Grand River) Chief Ava Hill, (Whitefish River First Nation) Chief Shining Turtle and (Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians) Grand Chief Gordon Peters, among others,” he said. “They really did an excellent job.”

Grand Chief Madahbee said that the exemption from delivery charges, along with the other reductions announced generally, will have a positive impact on First Nation communities across the province. “It’s going to be a big help to our communities for sure,” he said. “Some of the communities are really struggling. Every little bit helps.”

Under the plan an across-the-board relief of 17 percent is coming this way by this summer, in addition to an eight percent rebate that took effect on January 1. Those changes are estimated to cost about $1 billion per year.

Several other measures were announced by the premier to help low-income and rural residents at a cost of $2.5 billion over three years. A program that gives a rate subsidy to

those customers in rural and remote areas will also be expanded, so that ratepayers covered by local distribution companies with the highest delivery charges may also see their rates cut.

The Ontario Electricity Support Program for low-income ratepayers will be funded through government revenues and the benefits are being increased. A household that qualifies for the smallest credit, a single person earning less than $28,000, will soon save $45 a month instead of $30.

The province is also establishing an affordability fund for electricity customers who don't qualify for low-income conservation programs to make energy efficiency improvements.

How Premier Kathleen Wynne Became The Least Popular Premier In Canada
Toronto Sun
Wed Mar 15 2017
Page: A4
Section: News
Byline: Antonella Artuso

June 2014: A jubilant Kathleen Wynne defied sceptics to lead her party to a majority in a hard-fought provincial election campaign - the first woman in the history of Ontario politics to do so.

January 2015: Honeymoon ends abruptly with allegations Liberal operatives offered job bribe to get Sudbury byelection candidate to step aside for preferred choice - the NDP MP for the area. Liberal organizer Gerry Lougheed and former Wynne deputy chief-of-staff Pat Sorbara have been charged with corruption under the Ontario Election Act. Both deny wrongdoing but scandal continues to dog Wynne's Liberals.

Nov. 2015: The Wynne government begins selling off a piece of publiclyowned Hydro One, a move that proves extremely controversial.

Dec. 2015: Ontario Auditor General reports that electricity ratepayers spent $37 billion more than necessary because of the choices made by the Liberal government - a harbinger of what will become Wynne's biggest challenge heading into the 2018 provincial election.

Dec. 2015: OPP charge two Liberals in relation to the deletion of gas plant e-mails. Allegations, unproven in court, do not date from Wynne's time in the premier's office but hurt her government's brand.

April 2016: Wynne announces changes to political fundraising rules (in a statement she wrote at her kitchen table) after a number of negative reports about how the party raises money under her watch. She admitted, under pressure from the media, that her cabinet ministers had to meet fundraising quotas that allegedly went as high as $500,000, putting them in an uncomfortable position with stakeholders who lobby government.

May 2016: Auditor General reveals that Ontario Liberal government has given teacher unions $85 million in taxpayer money since 2000, including $22 million with "no strings attached." Meanwhile, teacher unions spent heavily at last election on campaign to keep Ontario Tories out of office.

Jan. 2017: Wynne government proceeds with controversial cap-and-trade plan, driving up cost of gas, diesel and possibly every product that depends on the use of fossil fuels.

March 2017: Wynne announces a major cut in hydro prices as Ontarians go ballistic over their bills and send her approval rating plummeting to new lows. Her fix, which includes renegotiating electricity supply contracts and moving some costs to the taxpayers, is expected to add $26 billion in interest payments over the long term but bring down bills this year and keep them down for four years. Ahead of her announcement, polls had her approval rating ranging from a paltry 18% to a sad 13%.

Brown's accusations 'out of place'
The Barrie Examiner
2017-03-15
Byline: Elizabeth Van Houtte Section: Opinion Page: C2

Re: "PC hydro plan coming," in the March 4 edition of the Examiner) Could it be that Simcoe North 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 Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne.

The MPP's accusations seem conveniently out of place.

I await the plan from the PC leadership. The Grits have already presented their electionseason

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 New Democratic Party (ONDP) 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 ONDP Simcoe North, president

Andrea Horwath reacts to Ross Romano's comments

SaultOnline.com
2017-03-14

The following statement was issued by the Provincial NDP Leader Andrea Horwath in relation to comments made by Sault PC candidate Ross Romano on Sault Area Hospital and Hydro rates

“The privatization of our hydro system, including lucrative contracts being awarded to an elite few, started under the Conservatives, and Kathleen Wynne is finishing the job.

That’s why it was bizarre to read the Sault’s Conservative candidate’s statement in the Sault Online. A cut-and-privatize Conservative is tying himself in knots, desperate to blame skyrocketing hydro prices on anything but privatization.

Saultites know what caused the sky-high hydro prices: well-heeled politicians letting friends and insiders make huge profits from the electricity system.

And the Conservatives’ solution? Who knows.

While Kathleen Wynne’s $40-billion borrowing scheme is a big win for bankers and obviously not the right plan, the Conservative leader and his local candidate, Mr. Romano, haven’t got a plan at all.

My plan is online for all to read, and it will save us all up to 30 per cent on our hydro bills. My plan provides immediate relief, and long-term change to the system to make electricity affordable going forward.

The Conservative leader has been a politician for 17 years – including nine years in the Harper government. He and his local candidate pretend that privatization isn’t the cause of the hydro-price crisis – and you have to wonder if that’s because they support continuing down the privatization path.

Sharing hydro frustrations
Tillsonburg News
2017-03-15
Byline: Ernie Hardeman Section: News Page: A9

Over the last couple of years I have shared numerous stories in the Legislature about the impact of high hydro costs. I talked about frustration and anger people are feeling and the hard choices they have had to make. For a long time the government ignored these concerns and responded to the opposition’s questions by telling us there wasn’t a problem. The Minister of Finance went so far as to say that hydro bills were going down.

Now the government has finally acknowledged the impact of their hydro policies and the hardship that people are facing as a result. While I’m pleased they have listened to the fact that

people need relief, I am concerned about the approach that they are taking. Unfortunately Premier Wynne and her government have done nothing to address the problems that created the increased costs.

We know that some of the hydro cost increases were due to contracts for renewable energy that the government awarded at rates as high as 80 cents a Kilowatt hour and the fact that we have signed contracts for power we don't need which we are now paying other jurisdictions to take. However, the day after the government's hydro announcement the government proceeded with more new contracts for green energy which will simply make the problem worse.

I am also concerned that they are simply delaying payment for many of these costs which is adding $25 billion in interest costs to the amount we will eventually pay -leaving our older selves and our children to pay for the problems this government has created. In fact in a call to an upset hydro ratepayer the Premier actually stated that the children who are in school today and going to have families in 10-15 years should be paying for these costs.

It is also concerning that although the government talks about amortizing the costs over 30 years many of these costs are not for government owned assets, but 20 year contracts with private sector companies. This means that we will be paying for the power for 10 years after it was used.

This government needs to realize not just that we have a crisis in hydro, but how we ended up here. They need to stop signing new contracts for power that we don't need and can't afford. They need to review existing contracts to see if there are savings. They need to address the exorbitant salaries of hydro executives - including the CEO who earns up to $4 million per year - and they need to stop the sale of hydro one.

I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their hydro stories with me and assure you I will continue to push the government to take real action to address the causes of these increases.

Community energy leader at Guelph city hall loses job

GuelphMercury.com
Tue Mar 14 2017
Section: News

City hall is saying goodbye to the man who has piloted Guelph's much-touted Community

Energy Initiative for the past eight years.

The departure of Robert Kerr, the city's manager of community energy, was made public in a low-key way Tuesday morning in the fourth paragraph of a city hall news release announcing what were described as "minor realignments" in one of the city's big service areas.

The changes being made within the infrastructure, development and enterprise services area "reflect the city's evolving role in community energy , which moves from a 'community oversight' to 'community support' role," said the release.

"In light of this, the city is saying goodbye to its former manager of community energy , Rob Kerr, who has been integral to the Community Energy Initiative's (CEI) creation and implementation," it said.

"An evolving focus on the effects of climate change on municipal services and infrastructure will see the creation of a climate change office, which will be part of the facilities management department," it added.

"Like all organizations, cities need to be responsive to changing priorities and ensure resources are deployed where they're most needed," Scott Stewart, the city's deputy CAO of infrastructure, development and enterprise services, said in the release.

"These adjustments are the right ones to make now to enable us to continue delivering high quality public service to citizens," said Stewart.

Stewart was hired in November 2015 to fill a deputy CAO post left vacant when its previous occupant, Al Horsman, left to become the chief administrative officer of Sault Ste. Marie.

Kerr was hired in April 2009 as the city's corporate manager for community energy, and he stayed in that post until December 2013. In that job, he was "responsible for developing and delivering the Community Energy Initiative," according to his online LinkedIn profile.

The CEI, which was approved by council in 2007 after years of work by city hall and several community partners, set ambitious energy goals for Guelph up to the year 2031. It is Guelph's 25-year plan to use 50 per cent less energy per capita and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent per capita, and it has been described as a model for energy planning at the community level in Canada.

Last April, city council decided to update the CEI, a process that is ongoing.

From January 2014 to January 2015, Kerr was transferred from his city hall job to act as general manager of the city's holding company, Guelph Municipal Holdings Inc. His LinkedIn profile says he was seconded to the GMHI position to "support the initial stages of GMHI's development in coordination with the Shareholder (City of Guelph)."

GMHI had been incorporated in 2011 with the goal of providing the city with a vehicle to manage certain city assets, including Guelph Hydro.

Former mayor Karen Farbridge's defeat in late 2014 and the subsequent appointment of the new mayor, Cam Guthrie, to GMHI's board in early 2015 led eventually to changes in the holding company's direction.

Last October, council decided to put GMHI on the shelf, at least for the time being.

It approved a series of recommendations for "rationalization" of GMHI's structure. Among other things, new active business operations of GMHI were to be "deferred" and functional control of Guelph Hydro Electrical Systems Inc., the local electricity distribution utility, was to be transferred from GMHI to the city.

From January 2015 to the present, Kerr's LinkedIn profile says, his job title was manager of community energy. In that role, the profile states, he was responsible for: "integration of Community Energy Initiative activities into investment attraction and retention"; "continued development of policy and programs that support the goals of the CEI"; and liaison with GMHI in "developing CEI-related project."

Kerr was paid $119,677 last year, according to the city's latest "Sunshine List" disclosure of employees making over $100,000. He was one of 96 non-union employees of the City of Guelph who made over $100,000 in 2015.

Tuesday's news release started by announcing that the city's infrastructure, development and enterprise services area had "undergone some minor realignments to reflect current organizational needs and the direction set out in the corporate administrative plan unveiled in 2016."

These "adjustments," it went on to say, allow for the creation of a new position at city hall to focus on downtown renewal - namely, real estate transactions in the downtown core.

“This new position will add much-needed capacity in an area that will advance considerable work over the next few years, including the downtown secondary plan,” the release said.

The city, it continued, also plans to hire a project manager to oversee implementation of the city’s parking master plan by shifting a current vacancy from one department to another. “This work will accommodate downtown population and employment growth targets through the creation of an additional 1,300 to 1,700 parking spaces needed by 2031,” it said.

The next paragraph mentions for the first time Kerr’s departure from city hall.

All of the changes “will be accommodated within existing budgets,” the release concluded.

The infrastructure, development and enterprise services area houses these departments: business development and enterprise; engineering and capital infrastructure services; environmental services; planning, urban design and building services; facilities management; and the project management office.

It is one of three big services areas at city hall, each led by a deputy CAO.

However, the corporate services area, which includes responsibility for city finances, is currently vacant following the firing last month of Mark Amorosi. He was fired by city CAO Derrick Thomson after being held responsible for the unintentional disclosure of personal information in emails turned over to lawyers involved in a wrongful dismissal lawsuit filed last year by Bruce Poole, the city’s former chief building official.

Amorosi, who had been the longest-serving member of city’s hall’s top echelon, was hired in 2007 to head city hall’s human resources department. He became deputy CAO for corporate services in a major city hall restructuring in November 2014, which was announced by then-CAO Ann Pappert shortly after the 2014 civic elections.

Colleen Clack, who was originally hired in February 2007 as the River Run Centre’s general manager, became the city’s deputy CAO of public services last June after Thomson moved from that post to replace Pappert as CAO.

Clack is currently filling in for Amorosi on a temporary basis while city hall seeks a replacement for him, while handling her duties as deputy CAO of public services at the same time.

Nuclear too expensive
Sudbury Star
Wed Mar 15 2017
Page: A10
Section: News
Byline: Cathy Orlando

Re: "New Hydro Plan Fairer for Northern Ontario," **March 11.**

The Wynne government's solution to high electricity costs has a $14-billion price tag over the next 10 years that we are hoisting on the next generation. We must do better.

In August, Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault likened Ontario's energy system to a Rubik's cube: you move one part of the Rubik's cube and all others move.

A key to solving **the Rubik's cube is aligning** certain **pieces. If we line up** certain **parts of Ontario's electricity system, we can solve much of this expensive** problem.

Missing from the Minister Thibeault's plan is nuclear **energy.**

Instead of pouring billions of more dollars into nuclear power, **let's close** Pickering **in 2018.** Nuclear **energy is a** boondoggle. **According to the David Suzuki Foundation,** "between 1956 and 2000, Canada's stateowned Atomic Energy of Canada Limited received subsidies totalling $16.6 billion. Even with these subsidies, nuclear power is far more expensive than both fossil fuels and renewables." **And these costs don't consider the lifecycle costs for cleanup after accidents,** waste **disposal and decommissioning** nuclear power **plants.**

This would also help reduce Global Adjustment Fees that are driving up electricity prices. On our bills, 46 per cent of the increase in these fees is due to nuclear power.

Getting rid of nuclear **energy will also reduce our need to sell our electricity at a loss. Ontario replaced most of its coal-fired electricity with refurbished** nuclear **energy and natural gas plants.** Nuclear **is an inflexible source of electricity so, at times of low demand, we have to offload excess electricity onto other electrical grids or** risk **overloading the grid. By reducing** nuclear **on our grid, we will reduce having to sell our electricity at a loss.**

I also agree **with others that we should not sell Hydro One. The Ontario Treasury over the long term needs that income.**

Finally, the rebates should not compensate high-energy usage. Low-and middle-income

earners use less energy than the top 1 per cent of earners. Thus, there should not be across the board 17-per-cent rebates - especially to the high earners living in monster homes that suck massive amounts of electricity. The rebate should be 17 per cent of the average energy usage with special compensations for low-and middle-income residents that have rural, northern and medical needs.

I look forward to hearing Minister Thibeault's thoughts on these suggestions.

Cathy Orlando