

EDU Issue - Windsor Star - Public school board cuts electrical consumption but costs still soar

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Hi team,

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Just flagging an article published today in the Windsor Star that criticizes the rising energy costs school boards have to deal with. Monique Taylor is also quoted – looking into what she means by *"she requested in November the figures for what Ontario's school boards are paying for hydro but hasn't received any information"*.
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KMs:

- Supporting children and youth with the best possible start in life through our strong publicly-funded education and early years' system remains a top priority for our government.
- Since 2003, we have increased education funding to \$22.9 billion - an increase of 59%.
- For this 2016-17 year, we increased funding again by more than \$300 million.
- That includes increases in funding to help boards keep up with their costs of cleaning, maintaining, heating and lighting schools as well as increases to capital renewal funding to help school boards improve energy efficiency of schools.
- For this school year, based on projections from the Ministry of Energy, we're increasing the School Operations Allocation by 3.5 percent to assist boards.
- We will continue to invest in our schools and to build Ontario's education system up, and in doing so, will continue to provide our students with one of the best education systems in the world.

NDP record:

- During the last election the NDP planned to cut \$600 M from important services like education.

Our record:

- Funding for Windsor school boards has increased by approximately \$421 million dollars - an increase of 58% since 2003.
- Per-pupil funding has increased by \$4700 since 2003 in 2015 - an increase of 67%.
- Built 4 new schools:
 - o West Gate Public School
 - o Talbot Trail Public School
 - o ÉSP Michel-Gratton
 - o ÉÉP Louise-Charron

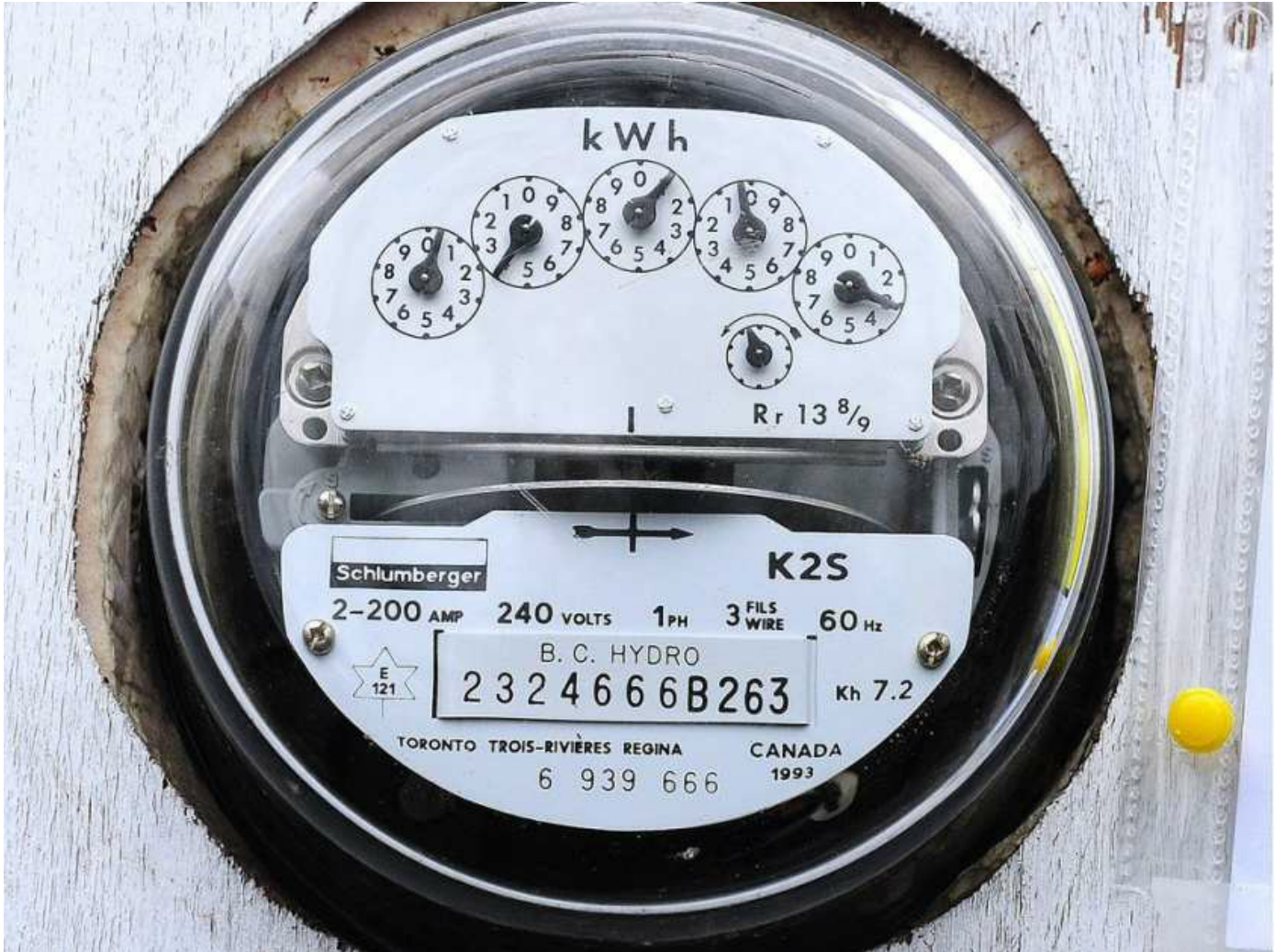
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DAVE WADDELL, WINDSOR STAR
[More from Dave Waddell, Windsor Star](#)

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Hydro meter NICK PROCHOROWICZ

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In 2016 the Greater Essex County District School Board used 2.1-million fewer kilowatt-hours than two years ago, but its hydro bill still rose by half a million dollars.

The board used 26.4-million kilowatt-hours at a cost of \$4.52-million in 2016 compared to paying \$4.038 million for 28.5 million kilowatts in 2014.

"We have to address this before it becomes a more significant problem," said trustee Ron LeClair, who requested administration review the board's hydro costs over the last three years.

"That goes right to operating costs that we have to offset (with money) from somewhere else.

"It does translate into a bottom line adjustment affecting our ability to provide programming and services to students."

In terms of the average cost per kilowatt-hour, the rate has increased nearly 20 per cent since 2014. Last year the average kilowatt-hour cost the board .17 cents.

To help boards deal with rising energy costs, the provincial government boosted funding for electricity by 7.3 per cent in each of 2015 and 2016. However, the increase still left the board with a shortfall of 3.4 per cent in 2015 and 1.9 per cent in 2016.

Administration's full report was presented at Tuesday's Board of Trustees meeting.

"Even when you factor in the province increased funding for utilities in anticipation of the increase in our costs, there's a shortfall that has to be covered (with money) from somewhere else," LeClair said.

The Windsor-Essex Catholic School Board has experienced a 24.2 per cent increase in costs (\$679,534) from \$2.8-million in 2011-12 to \$3.48-million in 2015-16.

Much of that rise has occurred in the past year with electrical costs increasing by \$213,918 or 6.5 per cent.

Windsor-West MPP Lisa Gretzky, the NDP's education critic, said this issue is impacting boards across the province.

"The Minister of Education (Mitzie Hunter) talked about sending more money to boards, but she clearly doesn't understand how much boards are paying for hydro," Gretzky said.

"Boards have to pass balanced budgets. They don't have a choice. They have to pay the bills.

"Ultimately students and front line staff will pay the price. There's going to be some very difficult decisions made."

Gretzky said she requested in November the figures for what Ontario's school boards are paying for hydro but hasn't received any information .

"The issue of hydro is just another thing in changing how we fund education that we need to look at," Gretzky said.

LeClair said the purpose of his requesting the report was two fold. One was to use the information to lobby the province for more funding, but also to see if the board could do more internally to cut consumption.

"If we hadn't reduced our consumption, it would've been significantly more costly for us," LeClair said.

The public board already has generated great savings through programs such as its annual Energy Challenge.

Last year the 41 schools and administrative offices participating in the challenge reduced their electrical consumption by 37,575-kilowatt hours.

In 2015, 49 schools reduced consumption of over 800,000 kilowatt-hours and 20,000 litres of water. That translated into savings of \$200,000.

A switch to more efficient LED lighting, the largest expense in the energy budget, reduced consumption by over 2.3-million kilowatt-hours.

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