

ENERGY media calls

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Hi all,

We have a few media calls to report. CTV Sudbury is doing a story on the end of the disconnection ban, and we sent them a statement. CHEX Peterborough is following up on the renewed talks between Hydro One and PDI. We shared a statement with them as well. OPG also received two inquiries regarding water levels in the Ottawa area. Full responses are below.

In addition, OPG issued the second tranche of Fair Hydro Trust debt. They shared their posting with the QP Gallery, and we followed up with a number of outlets. No one is currently looking to file, but they are now aware that the FAO's projected \$4 billion gap has been revised down to \$2 billion, given the borrowing rates OPG has been getting.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Best,
Colin

Minister's Office: 2 inquiries

Topic: End of disconnection ban

Reporter & Outlet: CTV Sudbury

Response type: Minister's spokesperson | Minister's statement

Context/Questions:

CTV Sudbury is putting together a story on the end of the disconnection ban.

Response:

Statement from Minister Thibeault:

Last winter our government passed legislation that granted the province's independent energy regulator the power to end all winter disconnections and protect Ontarians, because no one should ever be put at risk of disconnection in the winter.

Our priority is to make sure families and businesses in Northern Ontario have access to clean, reliable, and affordable electricity.

While the ban on winter disconnections ends on April 30, there are a number of government programs designed to help reduce the cost of electricity bills for vulnerable consumers. I would encourage all customers to contact their local utility about qualifying for programs that are in place to help.

For example, we expanded electricity support programs such as the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the Rural and Remote Rate Protection Plan, which provide support to low-income customers and those customers with the highest delivery rates. These customers are seeing savings of up to 40 to 50 per cent off of their electricity bills.

In prioritizing affordability, we also moved forward with the Fair Hydro Plan last year, which has lowered hydro bills by an average of 25 per cent for all residential consumers, and as many as half a million small businesses and farms. This is the largest rate reduction in Ontario's history, and any increases to electricity rates will be held to the rate of inflation for four years.

Topic: PDI/Hydro One consolidation

Reporter & Outlet: CHEX

Response type: Minister's spokesperson | Minister's statement

Context/Questions:

As I understand the province has been encouraging smaller electricity distributors like PDI to sell or merge and I am wondering in this case, what would a sale of PDI to Hydro One look like for rate payers here in Peterborough, or if the negotiations did breakdown again what might that look like in terms of rates of distribution if things remained status quo?

Response:

We can't speculate on future distribution rates, as electricity prices are set by our independent regulator, the Ontario Energy Board. That said, the Fair Hydro Plan reduced electricity rate by an average of 25 per cent across the province, and ensures that any increase to electricity rates are held to the rate of inflation for four years.

In regards to consolidation of utility companies, you can see the statement from Energy Minister Thibeault below:

We are always looking for ways to improve affordability and increase fairness for Ontario families and businesses. This includes the possibility of finding ways to save money through restructuring and consolidation of electrical utilities. That said, we don't mandate consolidation, and ultimately the decision around how to manage local utilities will be left to the local municipalities that manage them.

We have, however, removed impediments to make it easier to consolidate, when it makes sense for ratepayers.

As always, any consolidation, sale or acquisition of a local distribution company must also be approved by the independent Ontario Energy Board, which has a mandate to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the reliability and quality of electricity service, among other things.

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Agencies: 2 inquiries

Agency: OPG

Topic: Water levels in the Ottawa Valley

Reporter & Outlet: Mattawa Recorder

Response type: OPG spokesperson

Questions:

Writer with the Mattawa Recorder asking about low water levels on the Ottawa River near the town of Mattawa.

Background/Context:

Water is kept low because of a restriction in the river. This is the same issue faced each year in this part of the river. Water levels are kept low during the spring so the town of Mattawa doesn't flood.

Response:

-Spring melt is just starting and that will increase water levels and flows.

-Upstream of Des Joachims Generating Station on the Ottawa River near Mattawa water must be kept low due to natural restrictions that occur during high water flows;

- Water is restricted from moving through this narrow section of the river so water levels must be kept low until river flows have dropped considerably and the risk of flooding is very low.

Topic: Water levels in the Ottawa Valley

Reporter & Outlet: Moose FM (Barry's Bay)

Response type: OPG spokesperson

Questions:

Reporter asking about low levels at Bark Lake.

Background/Context:

Levels are currently low, but it is expected to return to normal as we move through the spring.

Response:

- Spring melt is just starting and that will increase water levels and flows.**
- Water levels are well below average for this time of year.**
- We are still operating within water management guidelines.**
- We will start to refill Bark Lake as we go through the spring melt and receive spring rain.**

Ministry: 0 inquiries

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