

RE: Time Sensitive Media Request: Allison Jones on Polling

From: "Beaudry, Jennifer (OPO)" <jennifer.beaudry2@ontario.ca>

To: "MacKenzie, Rebecca (OPO)" <rebecca.mackenzie@ontario.ca>, "@OPO-Media Relations and Issues Management" <opo-mediarelationsandissuesmgmt@msgov.gov.on.ca>

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 2017 15:22:02 -0400

With Edits...Blane is going to add dates to the itemized list in answer #1. Is this what you were thinking re: the AGM remarks?

- **The polling shows that electricity became the No. 1 concern in November 2015, 10 months before the eight-per-cent rebate was announced. Why didn't the premier bring in across-the-board relief sooner?**

The Premier has acknowledged that we should have acted sooner to provide across-the-board relief, but in saying that, we haven't done nothing. We have been making changes to reduce costs in the electricity system over the past number of years:

- *Permanently rebating the provincial portion of the HST to reduce bills by 8%, and cutting delivery charges for the most rural customers even further for a total savings of 20%*
- *Empowering industrial businesses to reduce bills by up to one third through the Industrial Conservation Initiative*
- *Signing an agreement with Quebec that will help make electricity here more affordable, clean, and reliable, and save about \$70 million in electricity costs. It will also offset reliance on natural gas power plants, reducing GHG emissions by one million tonnes each year.*
- *Removing the Debt Retirement Charge, saving the average family \$70/year on their bills*
- *Suspending the second round of the Large Renewable Procurement process, saving up to \$3.8 B in costs*
- *Reducing Feed-In-Tariff prices through annual price reviews, saving ratepayers at least \$1.9 B*
- *Renegotiating the Green Energy Investment Agreement with Samsung, reducing contract costs by \$3.7 B*
- *Deferring construction of two new nuclear reactors at Darlington, avoiding \$15 B in new construction costs*
- *Maximizing the value of our existing nuclear by delaying the start of the Bruce refurbishment – saving \$1.7 B – and continuing to safely operate Pickering up to 2024, saving up to another \$600 M*

Admittedly, more needed to be done and that's what we heard over the past number of months, from people across the province.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan will lower electricity bills by 25% on average for all residential customers across the province, and will also benefit half a million small businesses and farms. In addition, this rate relief is designed to last. After we bring bills down by 25% we will hold them there with rates rising only with inflation -- or roughly 2% -- for at least four years. This is the largest cut to electricity rates in the history of Ontario.

- **I recall Wynne's first public statement about how people were upset over hydro prices**

and that more needed to be done as the statement from the night of Sept. 1. Was there an earlier such statement, or is my recollection correct?

In September of last year the Premier committed to reduce electricity bills by 8% across the board, equivalent to the provincial portion of HST.

Below is a quote from the Premier's speech at the Ontario Liberal Party AGM in November:

"Standing before you today, I take responsibility for not paying close enough attention to some of the daily stresses in Ontarians' lives. Electricity prices are the prime example. I'll be frank, Ontario's electricity system was a mess, we had blackouts and smog days. The system was broken. And we had to fix it. Today, the system is clean and it's reliable because of the work we have all done to rebuild it. There are no more blackouts. No more smog days. And we should be proud of that. But the cost of the changes has burdened people in every corner of Ontario. People have told me that they had to choose between paying their electricity bill and buying food or paying rent. That is unacceptable to me. Our government made a mistake. It was my mistake. And I'm going to do my best to fix it."

- **Government asset polling dated March 2014 shows that respondents were asked for their thoughts on selling Hydro One, OPG, LCBO, OLG and eHealth. Was the government seriously considering selling eHealth?**

Minister Hoskins wrote to Ed Clark to seek out expert advice to assess the value of Ontario's digital health program, its assets, and all related intellectual property and infrastructure. The purpose of this review was to provide the government with a clear understanding of the agency's full asset value so that we might better understand the way it might be leveraged going forward to help guide Ontario's future digital health strategy.

As we have previously said, this future does not include the possibility of a sale, or the commercial use of people's health information. eHealth's current mandate is set to expire in 2017, and there is now an opportunity to engage experts in the field and determine what body/bodies are best positioned to maintain and leverage digital health assets to move towards a more patient-centred health care system supported by technology and innovation. We look forward to the assessment's recommendations.

From: MacKenzie, Rebecca (OPO)
Sent: March-24-17 3:06 PM
To: Beaudry, Jennifer (OPO); @OPO-Media Relations and Issues Management
Subject: Re: Time Sensitive Media Request: Allison Jones on Polling

For #2 let's add in the messaging from the AGM speech

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone on the Rogers network.

From: Beaudry, Jennifer (OPO)
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2017 2:58 PM
To: @OPO-Media Relations and Issues Management
Subject: Time Sensitive Media Request: Allison Jones on Polling

She below the questions from Allison based on the polling she's been looking into. I have provided suggested responses based on what we've previously said. See below.
I think you guys will probably have some edits. Allison is hoping for this by end of day.

From: Jones, Allison [mailto:Allison.Jones@thecanadianpress.com]
Sent: March-24-17 2:20 PM
To: Beaudry, Jennifer (OPO)
Subject: Story questions

Hey, as I think you might be aware from my polling FOI requests, I've been looking through the polling that was tabled recently with the library and will have some stories. So I've got some questions for you.

- **The polling shows that electricity became the No. 1 concern in November 2015, 10 months before the eight-per-cent rebate was announced. Why didn't the premier bring in across-the-board relief sooner?**

The Premier has acknowledged that not acting sooner to provide across-the-board relief is one of the things she would have done differently. We have been making changes to reduce costs in the electricity system over the past number of years, but what we've heard over the last number of months, from people across the province, is that it's not enough, that there's more that needed to be done, and so we have been looking at everything we could possibly do that would be more fundamental, that would be more structural and would lower people's electricity prices by a substantial amount. Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan will lower electricity bills by 25% on average for all residential customers across the province, and will also benefit half a million small businesses and farms. In addition, this rate relief is designed to last. After we bring bills down by 25% we will hold them there with rates rising only with inflation -- or roughly 2% -- for at least four years. This is the largest cut to electricity rates in the history of Ontario.

- **I recall Wynne's first public statement about how people were upset over hydro prices and that more needed to be done as the statement from the night of Sept. 1. Was there an earlier such statement, or is my recollection correct?**

In September of last year the Premier committed to reduce electricity bills by 8% across the board, equivalent to the provincial portion of HST.

The Premier referenced this during the Fair Hydro Plan announcement on March 2nd: "Beginning last year, I started to ask tougher questions about how we got to this point. And what could be done. For decades, bad choices have been made. Those governments, including ours, who for decades pushed off the price of reinvesting in the system? That was a mistake. Putting too much of the burden on a single generation of ratepayers? That was a mistake. And asking hydro users alone to pay for policies that ought to be paid for by all taxpayers? That was a mistake too. The policy was wrong. That made the pocketbook pressures impossible. And as Premier, I have an obligation to set the policy right. To put in place a fix that will work. And a fix that will last. Bringing down rates by 25% and fixing the system's structure -- that's the approach that I believe in. I think it's better for Ontario. And I know it's fairer on families."

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As we have previously said, this future does not include the possibility of a sale, or the commercial use of people's health information. eHealth's current mandate is set to expire in 2017, and there is now an opportunity to engage experts in the field and determine what body/bodies are best positioned to maintain and leverage digital health assets to move towards a more patient-centred health care system supported by technology and innovation. We look forward to the assessment's recommendations.

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