

Letter to the editor RE: NDP HYDRO PLAN GIVES MONEY TO CITIZENS, NOT BANKS

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

Words: 389 words

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy

The NDP hydro scheme is short on details and long on hollow promises. Many of their proposals rely on a vague and yet-to-be-determined “expert panel” that will be convened in the future, as well as pie-in-the-sky negotiations with the federal government. These offer little to Ontarians in the short-term, compared to the real and meaningful relief our government’s Fair Hydro Plan will provide to everyone starting this summer.

The NDP’s most expensive idea – buying back more than \$4-billion in shares of Hydro One – will not take one cent off electricity bills. The only impacts of this misguided measure would be to **line bankers’ pockets** and cut much needed infrastructure investments to communities across Ontario.

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Over and above the 25 per cent on average electricity bill cut for every family and small business, our Fair Hydro Plan will expand the Ontario Electricity Support Program to provide targeted help to the most vulnerable Ontarians. The expanded program will deliver an additional \$180 to \$276 per year for eligible families. Meanwhile, support for low-income Ontarians doesn’t even factor into the NDP plan, other than a promise to consider it in the future. Our government believes that support for the most vulnerable should be a central pillar of any energy plan, and that’s why we will provide targeted and meaningful relief to those who need it most.

Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan will also eliminate the delivery charge for on-reserve First Nations customers and remove some monthly service charges. This measure will save the average customer \$85 a month and is a move that Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day has commended and acknowledged it will “allow a path forward for greater quality of life for First Nations in Ontario”. Under the NDP proposal, First Nations are not mentioned once.

And as if the NDP proposal wasn’t damaging enough, their scheme would scrap Time of Use pricing, which would dial back conservation savings, and potentially lead to supply gaps. Time of Use has been a success, reducing our peak demand by up to five per cent, which means we don’t need to build costly new generation. However, it may not be the best model for everyone in the province. That’s exactly why we are already piloting different models that can give electricity customers choice in how they’re billed. But this needs to be implemented responsibly, not through a short-sighted system like the NDP have proposed.

Through Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan, our government is cutting electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all families starting this summer, along with hundreds of thousands of farms and small businesses.. It is the single largest rate reduction in the province’s history, and a way to ensure greater fairness in our electricity system. The PCs have no plan and the NDP hydro proposal offers nothing practical or substantial when it comes to real relief for Ontario families and small businesses.

