# Electricity prices to soar after four years, says secret Liberal cabinet document

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**Electricity prices to soar after four years, says secret Liberal cabinet document**

The average Ontario hydro bill will jump almost $10 a month in 2022 and soar to $195 by 2027 under the Liberal government's hydro plan, according to a leaked cabinet document obtained by the Progressive Conservatives.

As the Ontario government prepares to unveil legislation completing its 25 per cent hydro rate cut, the Progressive Conservatives have obtained leaked cabinet documents that suggest electricity prices will go up dramatically after four years. ( DAVE CHIDLEY / THE CANADIAN PRESS )

By ROB FERGUSO N Queen's Park Bureau

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The average hydro bill will jump almost $10 a month in 2022 and soar to $195 by 2027 under the Liberal government's hydro plan, according to a leaked cabinet document obtained by the Progressive Conservatives.

It was provided to the Star as Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault prepares to unveil legislation Thursday to enact a promised 25 per cent cut to skyrocketing electricity costs, keeping increases to 2 per cent annually until 2021.

But that's when the breathing room for ratepayers ends for the better part of a decade, suggests the document.

Average monthly bills will rise 6.5 per cent a year from 2022 to 2027 and are forecast to jump 10.5 per cent the year after when they will hit $195. That's up from $123 this year with the promised cut, lowering bills from an average $158 in 2016.

Rate increases, however, are minimal after 2028, falling slightly the next year and hovering around the 1 per cent mark from there until they are projected to fall 9.3 per cent in 2048, when the average monthly bill is expected to be $210.

Conservative sources say they obtained the information, called

Global Adjustment (GA) Smoothing with the subtitle Confidential Cabinet Document from a "whistleblower" after Thibeault's rate cut plan was presented to cabinet in early March. There is no date on the document, which has not been verified by the government.

Conservatives charged Thursday that the Liberal plan is all about boosting the Liberals' re-election chances in the June 2018 provincial election as Premier Kathleen Wynne struggles in the polls.

Thibeault maintained the Liberal plan is the best option for Ontarians, who have seen hydro bills double in the last decade as the electricity system was upgraded to become more reliable and phase out heavily polluting coal-fired generation stations.

"We're worrying about families now. We're worried about small businesses now," Thibeault said in the Legislature as he was peppered with questions by the Conservatives.

The minister, who took over the portfolio last June, slammed PC Leader Patrick Brown for stalling the release of his own plan for hydro rates.

"What's the position of the official opposition when it comes to their plan?" Thibeault said, noting it has been 70 days since Brown said he would reveal one soon.

"We're still waiting for anything credible."

The Conservatives are holding a policy convention in Toronto in November.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath revealed her hydro policy, which she said would result in rate cuts of up to 30 per cent, several days before the government came out with its 25 per cent plan.

Under the government scheme, 8 per cent came off hydro bills on January 1 with instant rebates of the provincial portion of the HST, with another 17 per cent to come this summer.

That will cost an extra $25 billion in interest charges over the next 30 years, by amortizing the costs of recent electricity system improvements over a longer period of time.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has compared that to a homeowner extending a mortgage term to get lower monthly payments.

The cabinet document also shows financing for the global adjustment portion of hydro bills — which covers the fixed costs of running Ontario's power generation fleet and conservation programs — structured to fall sharply for the next nine years then reverse to sharp jumps of over 20 per cent from 2028 to 2047.

Conservatives said that amounts to a "comeback" of the controversial hydro debt retirement charge eliminated in the last couple of years.

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