

Media Scan – Sudbury
(April 1, 2016 – October 24, 2016)

Issues Summary:

Over the past six months, there has been significant media coverage of energy-related issues Sudbury. The vast majority of media coverage has focused on issues being discussed across the province, including but not limited to:

- electricity prices and affordability
- privatization of Hydro One
- climate change (cap-and-trade, costs, natural gas, billing, etc.)

Local Issues

Electricity Prices

- A Sudbury Star poll from September 18th found that a majority of readers felt the province's price mitigation initiatives didn't do enough to reduce Ontarians' hydro bills. Readers voted 95 per cent no (520 votes), 23 readers (four per cent) voted yes, while seven readers (one per cent) were not sure.
- In October, Minister Thibeault was criticized in several articles in the Sudbury Star for telling Northern and rural Ontarians that they will get a 20 per cent reduction on their hydro bill as a result of price mitigation initiatives and rebates. NDP MPP France G  linas contended that most of the 1.8 million people in remote, rural and Northern Ontario don't qualify for the rebate.
- Northern media outlets reported that rising electricity prices topped the list of concerns when the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors group met in June.
- In October, there was substantial coverage concerning residents who were struggling to pay their electricity bills despite their conservation efforts. Some were forced to choose between paying for electricity and other necessities such as food and rent.
- On October 22, protestors took their concerns about climbing electricity costs to Minister Thibeault's Sudbury office.

Privatization of Hydro One

- There was on-going media coverage related to the sale of Hydro One. Constituents continue to demand that government "stop selling assets they have no right to sell."

- Consumers also viewed a correlation between the selling of Hydro One and the significant increase in their electricity bills. They stated they are opposed to the sale of Hydro One, “which will benefit a few shareholders at the expense of everybody who already can't afford their hydro bill.”
- Several protests against the sale of Hydro One were held in summer and fall at various locations in and around Sudbury.

Gasoline Prices

- In June, NDP MPPs from Northern Ontario wrote an open letter to Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault asking him to direct the Ontario Energy to monitor gas pricing, reduce volatility and increase competition. In May, the North Bay Nugget reported that the Northeastern Ontario Municipal Association was the latest group backing a resolution by the City of Timmins demanding regulated gasoline prices.

Cap and Trade

- On September 22nd, the Sudbury Star reported that the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, have written to the Ontario Energy Board critical of the Board’s decision to have cap and trade costs included in the delivery charge of utilities. Tracy Nutt, board chair of the Sudbury chamber, said, “Consumers should know how much of the charges on their bills comes as a result of cap and trade. It's about transparency. Given the premier's commitment to transparency around energy pricing, the chamber believes that the OEB should reverse their decision and align with other Canadian jurisdictions on this issue.”

Electricity Infrastructure

- In August, CTV Northern Ontario reported on complaints by local residents about noise and dirt from construction at Hydro One’s Martindale Transformer Station in Sudbury. Hydro One failed to notify the community before work started. Following the complaints, Hydro One said someone from the company would be meet with residents to discuss the project and options available to protect them from the dust and noise.

Billing

- In September, Greater Sudbury Utilities announced they would begin the process of issuing bills from every two months to one to comply with an Ontario Energy Board requirement that all local electricity distribution companies switch to monthly billing.

Community Energy Plan

- In June, the Sudbury Star reported about the progress of the city's Community Energy Plan. There are currently eight groups working on the plan, including the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Vale, the municipality, NORCAT, the Northern Policy Institute, Laurentian University, Greater Sudbury Utilities and the Social Planning Council. Former city councillor Janet Gasparini, who has been working on the plan, said, "We want people to be using more energy, wasting less at lower cost. That doesn't mean leaving your lights on longer or running your air conditioner more, but in fact, more businesses have relocated here, more homes have gone up and more people are living here, so in the community, we're using more energy, but wasting less."