Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
TBS

Key Messages

- The government respects independent officers of the legislature, and values the important perspective they bring but does not agree with the assertions and conclusions expressed in the Auditor General's Fair Hydro Plan report.

- The government has a strong track record of producing high-quality financial reports on a timely basis and continues to present the province's finances fairly and accurately and in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards.

- In developing the Fair Hydro Plan, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

- The Fair Hydro Plan operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

- The implementation of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is ongoing, with significant decisions with accounting and financial implications still being finalized. The financing plan and its impact will continue to be transparent and fully available to credit rating agencies, securities regulators, and the public.

- The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance, and the Treasury Board Secretariat remain committed to assisting the Office of the Auditor General in providing its independent views to the Legislative Assembly.

Top Questions

1. **The Auditor General says that the accounting structure for Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is not transparent, has poor value for money, and is not in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards. How do you respond?**

   The government has the utmost respect for all independent officers of the legislature, and values the important perspective they bring.

   The Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance, and the Treasury Board Secretariat remain committed to assisting the Office of the Auditor General so that it can provide its independent views to the Legislative Assembly.

   With regards to the Auditor General's report on Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) – while the government does not agree with the assertions and conclusions expressed in the report, the government thanks the Office of the Auditor General for its report.

   OFHP is delivering the single-largest reduction in electricity rates in the Province's history. In developing OFHP, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

   OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

   The implementation of OFHP is ongoing, with significant decisions with accounting and financial implications still being finalized.

   The Province's financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian PSAS and will follow PSAS in accounting for the transactions resulting from OFHP in 2017-18, and in following years.

   As PSAS is set by an independent standard-setting body in Canada focused specifically on the public sector, and because PSAS is used by all senior governments in Canada, presenting financial statements in accordance with PSAS results is transparent financial reporting for the Province of Ontario.

   Ontario has a strong track record of producing high-quality financial reports on a timely basis, and will continue to move forward and present the Province's finances fairly, accurately and in accordance with PSAS.

The Ministry of Energy would welcome further questions about OFHP and the government's investments in a reliable energy system.

2. **The Auditor General makes two recommendations in her report – to record the true financial impact of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan; and to use a financing structure that is the least costly for Ontarians. Will you adopt these recommendations?**

   The government does not agree with the assertions and conclusions expressed in the report.

   In developing OFHP, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

   OFHP is comprised of a series of policy decisions. The impact of some of these decisions will be borne by the Province (taxpayers) where appropriate, such as sales tax relief and shifting social programs to the tax base; some will be borne by ratepayers, such as spreading the investment costs and benefits across ratepayers more fairly.

   OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

   In order to meet the needs of users, including the legislature and the public, for accountability in government reporting and decision making, it is essential that public sector financial statements reflect the economic substance of the government's activities.

   The Province's financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian PSAS and will follow PSAS in accounting for the transactions resulting from OFHP in 2017-18, and in following years.

   As PSAS is set by an independent standard-setting body in Canada focused specifically on the public sector, and because PSAS is used by all senior governments in Canada, presenting financial statements in accordance with PSAS results in transparent financial reporting for the Province of Ontario.

   Ontario has a strong track record of producing high-quality financial reports on a timely basis, and will continue to move forward and present the Province's finances fairly, accurately and in accordance with PSAS.

The OFHP financing structure has been designed to provide electricity rate relief to current ratepayers, including by more fairly allocating costs for specified consumers, with the Global Adjustment cost amounts still ultimately borne by specified electricity ratepayers, as beneficiaries of those electricity system costs.

Ontario Power Generation (OPG) is beginning the process of raising funds to finance the deferred costs, and while total borrowing costs will not be known until the program is complete, accumulated interest is projected to be considerably less than the estimates in the May 2017 report of the Financial Accountability Office (FAO).

Total borrowing estimates over the thirty year life of OFHP have been revised down substantially by the government since the FAO released its report in May 2017, and borrowing costs are now forecast to be substantially lower than original estimates. Current government estimates forecast that the peak debt over the thirty year life of OFHP will be below $20 billion. The preliminary estimate from March 2017 was about $28 billion.

The Province will continue to prepare its consolidated financial statements in accordance with PSAS and continue to build on a track record of responsible fiscal management.

3. **Both the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer have raised serious concerns about the accounting treatment of the electricity cost refinancing initiative. Why should Ontarians believe this government over two independent officers of the Legislature?**

The government has the utmost respect for all independent officers of the legislature, and values the important perspective they bring.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) is delivering the single-largest reduction in electricity rates in the Province's history.

In developing OFHP, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

The Province, as always, will prepare its consolidated financial statements in accordance with PSAS and continue to build on its track record of responsible fiscal management.

4. **The Auditor General says that you are "obfuscating" the true financial impact of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan through a "needlessly complex" accounting structure. How do you respond?**

   Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) is delivering the single-largest reduction in electricity rates in the Province's history. In developing OFHP, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

   OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

   OFHP is comprised of a series of policy decisions. The impact of some of these decisions will be borne by the Province (taxpayers) where appropriate, such as sales tax relief and shifting social programs to the tax base; some will be borne by ratepayers, such as spreading the investment costs and benefits across ratepayers more fairly.

   While the implementation of OFHP is ongoing, with significant decisions with accounting and financial implications still being finalized, the financing plan for OFHP and its impact will be transparent. Credit rating agencies, securities regulators, and the public will see full information and full reporting of the impacts of OFHP.

   Ontario has a strong track record of producing high-quality financial reports on a timely basis. Ontario will continue to move forward and present the Province's finances fairly and accurately and in accordance with PSAS.

5. **Why do you keep differentiating between ratepayers and taxpayers? At the end of the day, the cost of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is being borne by Ontarians now and in the future.**

   Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

   The framework has been designed to provide electricity rate relief to current ratepayers, including by more fairly allocating costs for specified consumers, with the Global Adjustment cost amounts still ultimately borne by specified electricity ratepayers, as beneficiaries of those electricity system costs.

6. **How can you justify the $4 billion in additional interest expenses that will be borne by ratepayers because of the way the government has structured electricity cost refinancing (i.e. using Ontario Power Generation to finance 55 per cent, at a higher interest rate than the Province, instead of the Province financing the entire electricity cost financing)?**

   Defer to Minister Thibeault

7. **The AG claims that when the government first gave Ontarians an 8 per cent break on their bills, it was reported on the books properly. She says when it jumped to 25 per cent, the accounting changed. Isn't it obvious you're cooking the books to suit your needs?**

   - *Need information from program area*

8. **What will happen if interest rates rise? The Financial Accountability Officer (FAO) estimates that if interest rates were to rise, the true cost of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan could be between $69 and $93 billion. How can you justify shifting this heavy burden onto future generations?**

   Speculative – already seen that estimates have continued to fall. Defer any other questions on this to Glen.

Government Officials

9. **The Auditor General says that even your own government officials flagged the unnecessarily high costs of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan – and yet you chose to proceed. How can you justify this?**

   In developing Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP), the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

   Multiple options were considered in creating the OFHP framework – such as to have local distribution centres finance the difference between the amounts paid to the generators and the amounts collected from the ratepayers. This was rejected because of the inability of some local distribution centres to finance the balances.

The implementation of OFHP is ongoing, with significant decisions with accounting and financial implications still being finalized.

Ultimately, OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

Audit Opinion

10. The government just received another qualified audit opinion on its Public Accounts – this time based on two separate issues. Why do you continue to disagree with the Auditor General?

The government continues to move forward and present the Province's finances fairly and accurately and in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS). Ontario has a strong track record of producing high-quality financial reports on a timely basis. The Auditor General's qualified opinion is based on a different interpretation of PSAS for net pension assets and recognition of market accounts.

Last year there was a disagreement among the Province's professional accounting staff and the Auditor General's Office on the appropriate application of PSAS regarding pension accounting. As a result, the Pension Asset Expert Advisory Panel was established to deliver independent advice and recommendations on the issue to the Province.

The independent panel members concluded the Province's share of the net pension assets of both the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union Pension Plan should be recognized in Ontario's financial statements.

After significant deliberation, including consideration of the recommendations of the panel, Ontario confirmed that the accounting for these plans prior to 2015-16 was appropriate, and are prepared in accordance with public sector accounting standards for pension asset accounting. Further, EY provided additional analysis and concluded that no valuation allowance was required for either plan as of March 31, 2017. The 2016-17 financial statements include these pension assets, and we continue to apply the accounting treatment of pension assets that the Province has used consistently since 2001. In addition, the 2015-16 financial statements were restated to include these assets.

This year the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) began recognizing its market accounts' assets (amounts due from power distributors) and liabilities (amounts due to power producers) in its financial results. IESO has chosen to recognize these markets accounts on

its books for transparency reasons, as it better reflects the financial position of the IESO-administered markets at year-end. This change was supported by the IESO's audit committee, its independent external auditor, and finally by the Office of the Provincial Controller. This change also has no impact to the Province's annual deficit, net debt or accumulated deficit.

This accounting is consistent with the presentation used previously by the Ontario Power Authority (which was merged with the IESO on January 1, 2015) in its financial statements, which was not subject to qualification from the Office of the Auditor General at that time.

11. The Auditor General says that you anticipated the government would receive a qualified audit opinion – and accepted this risk. In the private sector this would be unacceptable. How do you figure you can get away with this?

The Province's financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS).

As PSAS is set by an independent standard-setting body in Canada focused specifically on the public sector, and because PSAS is used by all senior governments in Canada, presenting financial statements in accordance with PSAS results in transparent financial reporting for the Province of Ontario.

PSAS are principle based -- they are not a set of specific prescriptive rules. Applying them requires the application of professional judgment.

Our professional staff exercises judgment in applying the standards and as necessary consult with external experts and advisors. They provide the Office of the Auditor General with their written analysis on all significant issues that impact the financial statements for the year being audited, and they discuss the issues with the Office of the Auditor General.

All Chartered Professional Accountants (CPAs), including those employed by the Ontario Public Service (OPS), are required to comply with the Code of Professional Conduct for CPAs. One of those rules is that they not be associated with false or misleading information.

That means that if the professional accountants in the OPS do not agree with the judgment of the Ontario Auditor General, it is not as simple as just agreeing to accept the interpretation of the Office of the Auditor General if they believe that interpretation would result in false or misleading financial statements. While we expect professional accountants to agree on the vast majority of issues, we acknowledge that they may not agree on everything and when that occurs, and the difference is material to the financial statements, the Office of the Auditor General can choose to issue a qualified audit opinion.

12. Are you concerned that the Auditor General will issue an adverse opinion on the Province's Public Accounts due to Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan accounting? What would be the impact on the Province's credit rating?

It would be inappropriate to speculate about how the Auditor General may issue an opinion for Public Accounts next year. The implementation of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) is ongoing, with significant decisions with accounting and financial implications still being finalized.

The Ministry of Energy, Finance, and the Treasury Board Secretariat continue to work closely with Ontario Power Generation (OPG), the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), as well as third-party experts to ensure due diligence.

The Province's financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian PSAS and will follow PSAS in accounting for the transactions resulting from OFHP in 2017-18, and in following years.

The financing plan for OFHP and its impact will be transparent. Credit rating agencies, securities regulators, and the public will see full information and full reporting of the impacts of OFHP.

Ontario has a strong track record of producing high-quality financial reports on a timely basis. Ontario will continue to move forward and present the Province's finances fairly and accurately and in accordance with PSAS.

13. The Auditor General says that she has consulted with all of the Auditor Generals in Canada – and they agree with her assessments. How are we supposed to believe this government when all independent auditors in the country say you are wrong?

In developing Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

PSAS are principle based -- they are not a set of specific prescriptive rules. Applying them requires the application of professional judgment.

Our professional staff exercises judgment in applying the standards and as necessary consult with external experts and advisors. They provide the Office of the Auditor General with their written analysis on all significant issues that impact the financial statements for the year being audited, and they discuss the issues with the Office of the Auditor General.

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14. Are you going to hire an expert advisory panel, as you did on the pension asset accounting matter, to settle this dispute with the Auditor General? If so, what authority would this panel have?

We`ve already received advice from world class audit firms – opinions external to the OPS, and are confident that the accounting treatment associated with the OFHP.

In developing Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP), the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO)

15. The Auditor General was critical of the Independent Electricity System Operator's accounting changes, which formed part of her basis for a qualified opinion in the 2016-17 Public Accounts. Are these accounting changes inappropriate?

On recognizing market accounts' assets:

The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) began recognizing its market accounts' assets (amounts due from power distributors) and liabilities (amounts due to power producers) in its financial results. IESO has chosen to recognize these markets accounts on its books for transparency reasons, as it better reflects its net financial position on behalf of the IESO-administered markets at year-end.

This accounting change was accepted by the IESO's independent external auditor, which issued an unqualified, or "clean," audit opinion. These accounting changes were highlighted in the IESO's annual report which was published online in March 2017.

Further, this accounting is consistent with the presentation used previously by the Ontario Power Authority (which was merged with the IESO on January 1, 2015) in its financial statements, which was not subject to qualification from the Office of the Auditor General at that time.

This change has no impact to the Province's annual deficit, net debt or accumulated deficit.

This accounting change has been supported by the professional accounting staff of the Office of the Provincial Controller.

We will continue to work with the Auditor General to build on the government's track record of responsible fiscal management and high quality financial reporting.

On rate-regulated accounting:

The IESO made the decision to adopt rate-regulated accounting because it better reflects the economic substance of certain types of expenses that may not be directly recovered through the normal revenue requirement model.

The IESO, like Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation (OPG), is regulated by the Ontario Energy Board. The IESO adopted rate-regulated accounting for its year ended December 31, 2016.
This accounting change was accepted by the IESO's independent external auditor, which issued an unqualified, or "clean," audit opinion. These accounting changes were highlighted in the IESO's annual report which was published online in March 2017.

Rate-regulated Accounting

16. Why use rate-regulated accounting? What is its benefit?

In certain circumstances, an organization may be required to incur a large expenditure that will be recovered from ratepayers in the future.

For example, damage caused by an ice storm that results in extraordinary costs to restore a disruption of electricity services for customers. Such costs are subject to application and approval for recovery by the regulator over a specific time period.

What rate-regulated accounting does is it allows organizations to recognize those costs, which can be significant within a year but will generate benefits over time, to be matched over the same period that the amounts are recovered from ratepayers.

17. The Auditor General says that the Independent Electricity System Operator's decision to adopt rate-regulated accounting was a deviation from Public Sector Accounting Standards, and cautioned against its use in her Independent Auditor's Report. Why was this change made and was it appropriate?

Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) are effectively silent on this issue – they neither explicitly permit, nor prohibit, the recognition, measurement, presentation, or disclosure of rate-regulated activities.

In the absence of a clear position on an issue, standard accounting practice dictates that an entity should consult other accounting standards.

Paragraph 11 of the *Introduction to Public Sector Accounting Standards* ("Introduction") states: "When applying the CPA Canadian Public Sector Accounting (PSA) Handbook, where the standards are silent on an issue, public sector entities should apply Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), Section PS 1150."

In this case, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) consulted U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), the appropriate accounting framework in North America that provides guidance on rate-regulated operations.

The IESO made the decision to adopt rate-regulated accounting because it better reflects the economic substance of certain types of expenses that may not be directly recovered through the normal revenue requirement model.

The IESO, like Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation (OPG), is regulated by the Ontario Energy Board. The IESO adopted rate-regulated accounting for its year ended December 31, 2016.
This accounting change was accepted by the IESO's independent external auditor, which issued an unqualified, or "clean," audit opinion. These accounting changes were highlighted in the IESO's annual report which was published online in March 2017.

It is worth noting that currently 8 out of 9 electricity system operators in North American markets employ accounting for rate-regulated assets, including the IESO.

18. The Auditor General says that the use of rate-regulated accounting is inappropriate for the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board according to U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. How do you respond?

In commenting on the use of rate-regulated accounting and the role of the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), the Auditor General's report makes reference to a requirement under U.S. accounting standards in connection with the use of rate-regulated accounting that "there must an independent regulator." This reference is misleading as it does not provide the criteria in its entirety, which is as follows:

> *"The entity's rates for regulated services or products provided to its customers are established by or are subject to approval by an independent, third-party regulator* ***or by its own governing board empowered by statute or contract to establish rates that bind customers"*** *[ASC 980-10-15-2].*

The U.S. accounting standard was developed specifically to not preclude the application of rate-regulated accounting by government utilities where the rate regulator would not necessarily be viewed as independent (FAS 71, par. 64).

In addition, the position that rate-regulated accounting is precluded because the OEB is not considered independent of the government of Ontario is contradictory to accepting the use of rate-regulated accounting by Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and Hydro One – both of which are regulated by the OEB and whose results, using rate-regulated accounting, are and have been included in the consolidated financial statements of the Province.

IESO Response:

Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) are effectively silent on this issue – they neither explicitly permit, nor prohibit, the recognition, measurement, presentation, or disclosure of rate-regulated activities.

In the absence of a clear position on an issue, standard accounting practice dictates that an entity should consult other accounting standards.

In this case, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) consulted U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), the appropriate accounting framework in North America that provides guidance on rate-regulated operations.

Legislated Accounting

19. The Auditor General says that you are essentially making up your own accounting rules. How are Ontarians supposed to believe things like a "balanced budget" when you keep changing the rules?

The *Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017* and its related regulations **do not** create accounting rules or legislate the accounting. This is a fundamental disagreement the government has with the Auditor General's report.

The OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for its intended purpose. It is in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

The Province, as always, will prepare its consolidated financial statements in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS). The recording of any asset resulting from transactions of OFHP will be assessed for recognition and measurement based on PSAS, and where appropriate, other accounting guidance where PSAS is silent on the issue.

20. The Auditor General says that the Province legislated accounting through the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, which is not allowed according to Public Sector Accounting Standards. Is this true?

The *Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017* and its related regulations **do not** create accounting rules or legislate the accounting. This is a fundamental disagreement the government has with the Auditor General's report.

The Province, as always, will prepare its consolidated financial statements in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS).

As PSAS is set by an independent standard-setting body in Canada focused specifically on the public sector, and because PSAS is used by all senior governments in Canada, presenting financial statements in accordance with PSAS results in transparent financial reporting for the Province of Ontario.

PSAS are principle based – they are not a set of specific prescriptive rules. Applying them requires the application of professional judgment.

Our professional staff exercises judgment in applying the standards and as necessary consult with external experts and advisors. They provide the Office of the Auditor General with their written analysis on all significant issues that impact the financial statements for the year being audited, and they discuss the issues with the Office of the Auditor General.

The role of the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and its mandate is provided in legislation. It is not uncommon for government policy, through regulations, to provide the ground rules over which the OEB is to preside.

This is the case with Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) itself, as the Act and the various regulations provide the direction and processes over which the OEB is to exercise oversight, review, and make conclusion on submissions brought forward.

Relationship with the Office of the Auditor General

21. The Auditor General alleges the government withheld information from her on the accounting treatment for Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan. Why would she say that?

The government is committed to assisting the Office of the Auditor General so that it can provide its independent views to the Legislative Assembly.

The implementation of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is ongoing, with significant accounting and financial decisions still being finalized.

Senior ministry officials have met and continue to work with the Office of the Auditor General by participating in interviews and providing documentation.

If pressed:

The Auditor General was informed throughout the course of this process. Program area to add details (i.e. number of meetings, documents, etc.)

If asked about the Ministry of Energy emails:

The Ministry of Energy, Finance, and the Treasury Board Secretariat are committed to assisting the Auditor General. For questions related to the Ministry of Energy, please contact them directly.

Future Governments

22. The Auditor General says that you are essentially handcuffing future governments with your financing structure. Why should future governments have to pay for your decisions?

By responsibly managing the Province's finances, Ontario balanced the budget in 2017-18, and will maintain a balanced budget for the future.

With a growing economy and a balanced budget, this is the time to make investments in key services that matter most to people, like health care and education, while at the same time lowering costs for necessities like electricity and child care.

Over the last decade the government has rebuilt our electricity transmission and distribution grid, invested in clean generation, and closed the last coal-fired power plant. Prices have increased because our electricity system is being transformed – more than $50 billion has been invested to modernize the system.

The government heard from people across the Province that the price of electricity had risen too quickly, which is why Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan (OFHP) will ensure costs are shared more fairly over the years ahead.

As Ontario invested in renewing our electricity system, the government invested in many new generating facilities, most of which operate under 20-year contracts. Some of these generators are expected to provide value to the electricity system beyond their contract lives. There is an opportunity to recognize the long-term benefit of these assets to the electricity system and “bring forward” that benefit for ratepayers today by deferring some of the current costs.

To relieve the current burden on ratepayers and share costs more fairly, a portion of the Global Adjustment (GA) is being refinanced. Refinancing the GA is providing significant and immediate rate relief by spreading the cost of electricity investments over the expected lifecycle of the infrastructure that has been built.

In the early years, a portion of the costs covered by the GA is being refinanced to reduce pressure on today’s electricity ratepayers. In later years, the cost of refinancing will be recovered from ratepayers.

OFHP is delivering the single-largest reduction in electricity rates in the Province’s history. In developing OFHP, the government considered a range of implementation options and consulted with legal, accounting, financial and energy sector third-party experts to provide advice and ensure due diligence was completed.

OFHP operates under a financial and accounting framework that is appropriate for the intended purpose and ensures the goals underlying the program are achieved in a cost-effective manner.

The government recognizes that a fiscally sound approach to managing the Province’s finances will provide the foundation for the long-term well-being and prosperity of Ontarians, and protect the public services that Ontarians rely on.

For further questions related to Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan, please contact the Ministry of Energy.

23. Q re: Loss of Public Trust

Asset Sales

24. Will you buy back Hydro One so that it is back under public control?

For questions related to asset sales planning, please direct your questions to the Ministry of Finance.

25. What else will you sell just so that you can "balance the budget"?

The government has restored balance through targeted, measured and fiscally responsible decisions — managing growth in program spending and fostering job creation and economic growth.

A balanced budget also gives the government the fiscal flexibility to do more to help people. This is the time to make investments in key services that matter most to people, like health care and education, while at the same time lowering costs for necessities like electricity and child care.

The government is committed to dedicate net revenue gains from the sale of designated assets to the Trillium Trust, which is helping to fund transit, transportation and other key infrastructure projects across Ontario.

For any questions related to asset sales planning, please direct your questions to the Ministry of Finance.

Government Advertising

26. How can you justify spending $5.5 million on self-congratulatory advertising for Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan?

The government continues to communicate useful, factual information to the public while maintaining Ontario's status as a national and international leader in government advertising oversight.

Ontario is the first and only jurisdiction in Canada to have legislation that bans government-paid partisan advertising in newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, and television.

Ontario needs government advertising that is appropriate, reasonable and effective because the public has a right to know how public money is being spent, and why the government is bringing forward important policy changes.

At this time, I would like to clarify that the Treasury Board Secretariat is *not* responsible for individual line ministry advertising campaigns, and does not determine how much funding is allocated to any campaign.

For further questions about specific advertisements or advertising campaigns related to Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, please contact the Ministry of Energy.

27. Placeholder: Q regarding Advertising Standards Council

Executive Compensation

28. How can you justify the exorbitant salaries paid to Hydro One executives when families are struggling to pay their hydro bills?

The government remains committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in how broader public sector employers manage executive compensation.

However, Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, and decisions regarding compensation are not made directly by the government.

For further questions about executive compensation and oversight of specific organizations, please contact the Ministry responsible.