

News Update - May 15

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MINISTER'S NEWS

TheStar.com: [NDP wants financial watchdog to assess the Liberal's hydro rate cut plan](#)

The NDP has asked Ontario's financial accountability officer to assess the government's 25 per cent hydro rate cut legislation given leaked cabinet documents showing rates trending sharply higher in a few years. "I don't trust Liberal numbers," New Democrat MPP Peter Tabuns said Friday after sending a letter to Stephen LeClair, the province's independent financial watchdog. An "objective assessment" of the plan and its long-term costs is crucial with the government planning to pass the bill before the Legislature rises for its summer recess in three weeks on June 1, Tabuns added.

NationalPost.com: [Chris Selley: Ontario Liberals kept their promise of short-term hydro relief. What happens after is another story](#)

This week wasn't super great for the Ontario Liberals. On the day they tabled their Hail Mary "Fair Hydro Plan" legislation to cut average hydro bills by a total of 25 per cent, the Tories shared with the media a leaked Cabinet document that rather spoiled the narrative. You'll never guess what: according to this undated document, the relief is temporary. It projects that from 2022 to 2029, the average bill will rise from \$142 to \$214 — that's 51 per cent, which is exactly how much the average bill rose from 2010 to 2017, creating a marquee political crisis for Premier Kathleen Wynne and her party. Bills would continue to increase every year, more slowly, until 2047, before finally declining. **Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault** called the document "outdated" and the data in question "months old."

TVO.org: [The government's latest hydro plan is an insult to voters — and it might not even work](#)

Let's set aside for a moment the question of whether the government's "Fair Hydro Plan" will actually work (we'll come back to it, don't worry). The idea, formally presented by **Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault** at Queen's Park on Thursday, is to have Ontario Power Generation take on an enormous amount of debt to give residential ratepayers a 17 per cent discount on their electricity bills. The government needed to find some way to cut costs to homeowners while making power producers — who have binding contracts — whole. All that debt will have to be paid back, plus interest, in the future. **Thibeault** predicted it would be gone by 2047. Children born this year will be having children of their own before then. Given there are billions at stake, decades to plan for, and acknowledgement from the Liberals that this debt will tie the hands of future governments, MPPs need ample time to double-check the government's work.

LOCAL NEWS

BayToday.ca: [Thibeault dismisses leaked documents](#)

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault is dismissing the Progressive Conservatives fear-mongering tactics that energy rates will skyrocket after the next four years. **Thibeault** was in North Bay Friday to announce legislation that would lower electricity bills by 25 percent for the average family in Ontario, those in rural Ontario could see their costs drop by 40 to 50 per cent. If the proposed Fair Hydro Act is passed, hydro relief could come as quickly as this summer. The legislation is getting a lot of attention since it was announced by **Thibeault** on Thursday, but it's not all good. The expected good news announcement came under fire the same day that secret cabinet documents were leaked by a government whistle blower to the Conservatives.

CBC.ca: [Kathleen Wynne to First Nations chiefs: Do not 'squander' \\$1B Ring of Fire promise](#)

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne is signaling she's ready to walk away from joint talks with nine First Nations affected by the Ring of Fire mining development and proceed individually with any chief who will work with her. The message was sent from the Premier in a May 10 letter addressed to the chiefs. It comes after a meeting among them in Toronto on May 1. In the letter Wynne tells chiefs they "should not squander" her 2014 commitment to spend \$1 billion to help build a road to the chromite and nickel deposit in the James Bay lowlands.

SooToday.com: [Amaroso meeting with seniors causes political flap](#)

A meeting between Sault provincial byelection Liberal candidate Debbie Amaroso and seniors at the Collegiate Heights Retirement Residence Friday has turned into a political issue. Amaroso said what turned out to be an address to seniors at the residence, followed by a question and answer session conducted by herself, was originally intended to be an all-party debate hosted by a community group. However, PC candidate Ross Romano and NDP candidate Joe Krmpotich did not attend. "This 'proposed debate' was not in any way being organized by a local community group but by the Liberals themselves," Romano asserted in a written statement.

Nugget.ca: ['I just wish I could give you the right answer. We all share in the challenge'](#)

Provincial cabinet ministers were unable to offer municipal leaders any solutions Friday to the long-time challenge of growing Northern Ontario. Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Mauro, **Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault** and Natural Resources Minister Kathryn McGarry participated in the "bear pit session" at the annual Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) conference in North Bay, where they were asked about how to bridge the gap between the Greater Toronto Area, which is experiencing tremendous growth, and the North, where the population is declining in many areas. Unfortunately, the three couldn't provide a cure-all for the North's woes. "We can do a lot more to talk about promoting growth and expansion in Northern Ontario by utilizing the facilities that we already have," said **Thibeault**, referring to post-secondary institutions such as Canadore College and Nipissing University.

SUDBURY ISSUES

Business: [Sour on city hall](#) (Letter to the Editor)

'Biz owner angry over Kelly Lake Road construction,' May 4. Finally, businesses in the city are becoming frustrated enough to start biting back. It wasn't that long ago that the Junction Creek crossing of Kelly Lake was dug up for months and now they are going back at it. Businesses can't endure these types of planning snafus because sooner or later they either move out or go out of business. The entire west end will be at reduced business volume for a lengthy period of time during 2017. At the same time, the private club formed for the Place des Arts is getting a green light to move forward. Apparently this is what is meant by economic development in the city "I drive industrial jobs out of business or out of the city and replace them with government-funded

playrooms for the arts.

Labour: [Contracting grievance dismissed](#)

An arbitrator has ruled that Vale Canada's use of a contractor to maintain and repair its railway line in Greater Sudbury is proper. Larry Steinberg found the employees of the contractor remained under the supervision of the contractor, even though they sometimes worked alongside unionized employees who are members of United Steelworkers Local 6500, which filed in a grievance in the case. However, Steinberg also said Diesel Electric Services employees doing the work should not have been using Vale shop tools and supplies and that they must stop the practice.

Environmental: [Public meeting on Ramsey Lake subwatershed study goes May 18](#)

The second series of public meetings for the Ramsey Lake subwatershed study will continue with an open house May 18, Greater Sudbury has announced in a news release. The session takes place from 4-6 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 76, 1553 Weller St. in Sudbury. "Water resources are an important aspect of daily living in our community," the release said. "From drinking water for our residents and animals, to the support of habitat for our plants and wildlife, and great recreation opportunities for residents, protecting our watersheds is a priority outlined in the City of Greater Sudbury Official Plan."

Indigenous: [Planetarium show offers 'immersive experience'](#)

Science North plans to take its first ever planetarium show on the road. Under the Same Stars: Minwaadiziwin was developed in partnership with indigenous people from across Northern Ontario. It uses indigenous worldview to understand the common constellations visible in the night sky and the Anishinaabe stories that define them. This project was made possible due to Ontario150 funding from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "Under the Same Stars: Minwaadiziwin is an extraordinary exhibition that underscores Science North's position as a leading science centre in Canada and a top tourist destination in Northern Ontario," Eleanor McMahon, minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, said in a release. "I'm delighted that the Ontario150 program is supporting this unique experience, which will teach us all a little bit more about constellations and the sacred Anishinaabe stories behind them."

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