

RE: Ministry of Energy Top Issues - March 22, 2017

From: "Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)" </o=govon/ou=exchange administrative group (fydibohf23spdlt)/cn=recipients/cn=whittington, matt (energy)cce">
To: "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>
Date: Wed, 22 Mar 2017 18:10:06 -0400

Ok. Just wondering/

From: Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)
Sent: March-22-17 6:09 PM
To: Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)
Subject: Re: Ministry of Energy Top Issues - March 22, 2017

Yes we did.

The caveat is that Rumina was first recommended fall 2015, and approved by Cabinet Dec 2016.

Aly was appointed as OLO CoS last month.

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone on the Rogers network.

From: Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 6:05 PM
To: Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)
Subject: FW: Ministry of Energy Top Issues - March 22, 2017

Velshi is the mother of Alykhan Velshi, Tory leader Patrick Brown's new chief of staff.

Did we know this?

From: Cvjeticanin, Dan (ENERGY)
Sent: March-22-17 7:13 AM
To: @ENERGY All
Subject: Ministry of Energy Top Issues - March 22, 2017

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

- Ontario PC leader pledges to scrap cap-and-trade, restore auditor's veto on government ads -- The Toronto Star
- Energy minister rejects Hardeman's criticisms; Glenn Thibeault slams provincial Tories for not offering their own plan to reduce electricity costs -- Tillsonburg News
- Canada: Study Estimates Billions Of Dollars In Benefits From IESO's Market Renewal Project -- Mondaq News Alerts

- Energy Companies Work Towards Merger -- Blackburnnews.com
- How Ontario's cap-and-trade system works: a few basic details -- The Canadian Press
- Cap, trade another taxpayer burden -- Toronto Sun
- MPP concerned about approach to hydro -- Norwich Gazette
- Smoking out investors; Provinces considering carbon pricing watch Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction -- Daily Observer (Pembroke)
- Provinces eye Ontario's cap-and-trade auction; May be blueprint for carbon-pricing as other jurisdictions face new federal rules -- Windsor Star
- PC motion to halt Liberal hydro ads defeated – CANOE
- NDP says energy costs a threat to health care; Expense more than doubled at St. Joseph's Healthcare from 2010 to 2016 -- The Hamilton Spectator
- NDP says energy costs a threat to health care; Expense more than doubled at St. Joseph's Healthcare from 2010 to 2016 -- The Hamilton Spectator
- Hydro rates: London Health Sciences Centre electricity use falls, but costs up 30 per cent -- The London Free Press
- LHSC Electricity Costs Jump Almost \$2M -- Blackburnnews.com
- WRH hydro bill up 50% in five years: NDP -- CTV News
- Liberal plan to cut hydro rates leaves hospitals hung out to dry: NDP – CANOE
- NDP Says Hydro Costs are Impacting Quality of Health Care -- Source: CFPL
- PC Leader Takes Issue with Liberal Party Flyers Promoting Hydro Reduction Plan -- Source: CHCH
- Deputy Premier Clarifies Hydro Pamphlets Are Funded By Liberal Party -- Source: Global
- Liberals Facing Backlash From PCs Over Hydro Ads -- Source: CFPL
- MPP Todd Smith Was Escorted Out Of The Legislature During Hydro Ad Debate -- Source: CFTO
- MPP takes heat after 'demeaning' comment -- Toronto Star
- Town Council Investigating Wind Turbine Noise After MOE Fails to Take Action -- Source: CFPL
- The Agenda: Panel On Premier Kathleen Wynne's Political Future -- Source: TVO

Ontario PC leader pledges to scrap cap-and-trade, restore auditor's veto on government ads

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown is making some promises he may have to keep if he wins next year's Ontario election.

On Tuesday, Brown vowed to withdraw the province from the Western Climate Initiative, which it joined in 2010 in partnership with Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, California, and six other American states.

The Conservative chief, who leads Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne in public opinion polls, has been deliberately coy about his plans for governing after the June 7, 2018 vote.

With a policy conference set for November in Toronto, the Tories want to make as few commitments as possible in order to appease grassroots members and avoid the missteps that have kept them in opposition since 2003.

But as Ontario's first carbon-price auction kicks off Wednesday, Brown said he would yank the province from the Western Climate Initiative bloc that works on joint strategies to reduce greenhouse gases.

"We would want to exit from this framework as quickly as possible," he told reporters. He said the party's policy advisory committee is examining the legal implications.

The comments from Brown, who has, instead, promised a carbon tax the Liberal government says would be more expensive than its cap-and-trade program, could have an impact as companies decide how much to bid on carbon credits in the auction, which takes place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Fuming about a new radio advertising blitz by the provincial government promoting the cut in hydro rates of 25 per cent, Brown vowed to restore the auditor general's power to veto government advertising.

While former Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty gave the auditor supreme oversight of such ads in 2004 to eliminate partisan messaging at taxpayer expense, his successor Kathleen Wynne watered down those regulations in 2015.

"I absolutely feel it should be strengthened again," said Brown, who has complained the hydro ads are in contempt of the legislature because MPPs have not yet voted on legislation to implement Liberal's plan to cut rates.

"There's a reason they stripped the auditor general of the powers to review (government advertising). This is an abuse of taxpayer dollars. These are partisan ads."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said her party would “absolutely” restore the auditor general’s powers over advertising.

“There’s a practically invisible line between the Liberals’ partisan activities and their governing.”

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault has defended the ads, saying it’s legitimate to let citizens know their hydro bills will be going down this summer.

Energy minister rejects Hardeman's criticisms; Glenn Thibeault slams provincial Tories for not offering their own plan to reduce electricity costs

Tillsonburg News
2017-03-22

Ontario’s energy minister offered his own criticism of the province’s Progressive Conservative, responding Thursday to comments made by local Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman.

In a statement provided to the Sentinel-Review, Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault said the PCs have been eager to criticize his government’s proposed hydro plan but have offered no plan of their own - or any ideas - that would help lower electricity costs.

“While our plan provides substantial, wide-spread and longlasting relief that will have an immediate impact on peoples’ lives, MPP Hardeman and the PCs have yet to bring forward anything credible,” Thibeault said. “One of their criticisms - halting the broadening of Hydro One - won’t take one cent of electricity bills. And their push to rip up energy contracts would lead to increased rates, lawsuits and penalties.”

Through Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan, Thibeault said the provincial government is cutting electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all families starting this summer, as well as about half-a-million farms and small businesses.

“It is the single largest rate reduction in the province’s history, with rates also held to inflation for the next four years,” he said. “Our plan is about real relief for Ontarians and a way to ensure greater fairness in our electricity system.”

Hardeman said he was unimpressed with the provincial Liberal governments proposed Fair Hydro Plan earlier this week, adding the solution being proposed was to just defer costs for hydro to the future.

The proposed plan was introduced recently by the provincial liberal government and will ultimately give an average of 25 per cent off electricity bills for households, farms and small businesses. This target is going to be reached, however, by paying the costs of the electricity generation contracts over longer periods, which will mean higher interest fees down the road.

But in an interview with the Sentinel-Review, Hardeman said the government has to look at the root cause as to why hydro prices are so high.

“One of the main ones is, of course, the Green Energy Act, which is putting a lot of the cost of the hydro that they’re paying for and putting it into the global adjustment pot and trying to pay for it that way,” Hardeman said. “If they don’t look at how we got into this mess and solve that problem, obviously the mess is going to keep growing as time goes on.”

According to the MOE, the Fair Hydro Plan will enhance lowincome support (OESP) and some customers could see as much as a 40 to 50 per cent reduction in their electricity bill.

Canada: Study Estimates Billions Of Dollars In Benefits From IESO's Market Renewal Project

Mondaq News Alerts

A [recent study prepared by the Brattle Group and others for Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator \(IESO\)](#) estimates that Ontario could realize net benefits of \$2.2 billion to \$5.2 billion from reforming the wholesale electricity markets. This would be achieved through the IESO's proposed Market Renewal Project. The benefits would start around 2021 and would primarily flow to Ontario consumers. Based on the analysis outlined in the study, the Brattle Group recommends that the IESO proceed with developing a market design for Market Renewal and identify options to maximize benefits and minimize associated costs.

The IESO's Market Renewal Project, which was commenced in 2016, is aimed at "overhauling" Ontario's "two-schedule" wholesale electricity market. The current market approach (which was intended to be temporary, but which has been in place for 15 years) uses one scheduling sequence that takes into account system constraints to schedule generation and uses another scheduling sequence to determine price based on an unconstrained transmission system. This results in inefficiencies.

As seen in the following excerpt from the [Brattle Group study](#), there are three workstreams associated with the Market Renewal Project:

1. **Energy** : Move to a single-schedule market, including locational marginal pricing for suppliers, improved generation commitment and dispatch in real time, and a financially-binding day-ahead market.
2. **Operability** : Increase system flexibility and improve utilization of interties with neighboring systems to reduce the cost of surplus-generation conditions, variable renewable generation uncertainty and the need to curtail resources.
3. **Capacity** : Improve procurement of resources to meet the province's resource adequacy needs through an incremental capacity auction that stimulates competition from all qualified supply resources in a technology-neutral manner.

The Brattle Group estimates that substantial savings can be achieved through each workstream. Among other things, the savings will be achieved through improving the electricity system's ability to identify and use the lowest cost resources (including interties) to meet demand and by reducing curtailment and increasing export revenues. There is an expectation of greater competition and lower costs for future generation requirements. The benefits are estimated at \$160 million per year in 2021, to as much as \$670 million in later years. In total, the benefits over ten years will be more than \$2 billion (and could be as much as \$5.2 billion).

The final section of the [Brattle Group study](#) is titled "Findings and Recommendations." It starts with the overall recommendation that the IESO continue to pursue the Market Renewal effort,

because of the significant associated significant policy and economic advantages. This section of the study also offers a number of specific recommendations for consideration by the IESO, stakeholders and policymakers in order to maximize the benefits and mitigate the risks of Market Renewal. These recommendations are grouped under headings such as Policy Alignment and Future-Readiness, Energy Market Reforms, Operability Reforms, Capacity Auction, Long-term Contracts and Implementation Process and Costs.

Energy Companies Work Towards Merger

Blackburnnews.com

2017-03-22

Entegrus and St. Thomas Energy are on the road to submitting an application to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), in order to make the possibility of a merger a reality.

An information session was held at the John D. Bradley Convention Centre in Chatham Tuesday night. During the session, President and CEO of Entegrus Jim Hogan told BlackburnNews.com that the two companies are now in the “due diligence phase.”

“The due diligence phase is where we look at each other’s companies in greater detail,” says Hogan. “We learn about the contracts we all have, who our suppliers are ... just really getting into the details of our businesses and how we run things.”

In addition to the administrative details, Hogan says both companies have been working to learn more about the other utility and build relationships with the employees.

An application for the merger is expected to be submitted to the OEB in May, but Hogan says it’ll take about six months to hear back from them once the papers are in.

Since the announcement was made about the [possible merger in December 2016](#), Hogan says they haven’t received many comments from Entegrus customers.

“This is something that’s good,” he says. “This is an opportunity for us to find some additional efficiency and over a longer period of time customers should see their bills being the same if not lower.”

Agreeing with the benefits of this merger was COO of St. Thomas Energy Rob Kent.

“It’s a really good thing to be happening for all parties involved,” says Kent. “We haven’t heard any negative feedback.”

Should the application by the two companies be approved by the OEB, the merger would take

place in January 2018.

Additional information sessions will be held in Strathroy and St. Thomas within the next couple of weeks.

On March 23, a session will be held at the Gemini Sports Complex in Strathroy from 6:30pm-8:30pm.

On March 30, a session will be held in St. Thomas at the CASO Station from 6:30pm-8:30pm.

How Ontario's cap-and-trade system works: a few basic details

The Canadian Press
2017-03-21

TORONTO – Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction takes place on Wednesday. Here is a basic explanation on how the cap-and-trade system is expected to work.

- Ontario has set a greenhouse gas emissions cap of roughly 142 megatonnes for 2017.
- Companies that pollute at least 25,000 tonnes per year will have to have a number of allowances equal to their emissions.
- One allowance is equal to one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent.
- The allowances will be available for purchase at quarterly auctions. Participating businesses can also buy and sell credits to each other on a secondary market.
- Most large emitters will receive allowances for free until 2020, which the government says is meant to prevent them from moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing.
- Fuel distributors and electricity importers will not receive the free allowances.
- The emissions cap will decline each year, from 142 megatonnes in 2017, to 136 megatonnes in 2018, to 131 megatonnes in 2019, to 125 megatonnes in 2020, which is equal to the government's target of getting emissions 15 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.
- As the emissions cap declines and fewer allowances are available, the government hopes the incentive increases for companies to invest in technologies that cut their emissions.
- The floor price on carbon is expected to be set for auctions at between \$17.50 and \$18 per tonne, though demand could push the price higher.

- Participating companies can also purchase and use offset credits to meet up to eight per cent of their emission allowance requirements.
- Offset credits will be created by projects outside Ontario that reduce or remove one tonne of greenhouse gas emissions, such as tree planting or capturing and destroying methane gas, and those credits can then be sold to Ontario cap-and-trade participants.
- Companies can also get some early reduction credits for work already done to reduce emissions.
- Cap-and-trade proceeds are directed to a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account to fund green projects such as home and business retrofits.
- Ontario's cap-and-trade system is expected to be linked to Quebec and California's in 2018.

Cap, trade another taxpayer burden

Toronto Sun
Wed Mar 22 2017

It's hard to imagine how even Premier Kathleen Wynne's incompetent government could screw up its first auction of carbon credits to major industrial emitters Wednesday under its new cap and trade plan.

That's because this one only involves Ontario industries, and the province established all the rules.

The bigger gamble will come next year when Ontario joins the rollercoaster California-Quebec cap-and-trade market.

Essentially a highly speculative stock market trading in carbon credits, it has been crashing with alarming regularity.

Three of its last four quarterly auctions have seen dismal sales of carbon credits, underfunding the two governments' Ontario's first auction is a confusing and littleunderstood affair.

Of 240 greenhouse gasemitting industries, which fall under Wynne's capand-trade scheme, 102 are getting free carbon credits from the government - free money, courtesy of taxpayers - for at least the first four years of the program.

That's to prevent them from bolting to other jurisdictions that don't have a national carbon pricing scheme, such as the United States, our largest trading partner.

Indeed, it's particularly reckless for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to be imposing a national carbon price on Canadian consumers and taxpayers when the U.S. is heading in the opposite direction under President Donald Trump.

What Wynne and Trudeau are doing is saddling the Canadian economy with a new cost of doing business that our American competitors don't have, necessitating the need for ever-increasing public subsidies to convince businesses to stay in Canada, instead of bolting for the U.S. and other jurisdictions without carbon pricing.

The Wynne Liberals expect each carbon credit - entitling the bearer to emit one tonne of industrial carbon dioxide or its equivalent - will have an initial auction price of about \$18, raising \$1.9 billion annually for their government.

All Ontario taxpayers will pay for this in the form of increased prices on almost all goods and services, since almost all consume fossil fuel energy.

The Wynne government says the initial cost to Ontario households will be \$156 annually in higher gasoline and natural gas prices alone, but its own revenue projections suggest the actual cost will be almost \$340 per household per year.

Whatever the number, the cost of living for Ontarians will increase because, while Wynne and Climate Change Minister Glen Murray insist carbon pricing "makes polluters pay," the reality is these businesses simply pass along their increased costs to the public in the form of higher retail prices for most goods and services.

Europe's 12-year-old cap-and-trade market, the Emissions Trading Scheme, on which Ontario's is modelled, has been far more efficient at raising the cost of living than lowering emissions.

Finally, Wynne's scheme is not revenue neutral - lowering other taxes so that the government's overall revenue from cap and trade doesn't increase total revenues - meaning it's basically a cash grab by the cash-strapped Wynne government, not a genuine emissions reduction plan.

MPP concerned about approach to hydro

Norwich Gazette
2017-03-22

Over the last couple of years I have shared numerous stories in the Legislature about the impact of high hydro costs. I talked about frustration and anger people are feeling and the hard choices they have had to

make. For a long time the government ignored these concerns and responded to the opposition's questions by telling us there wasn't a problem. The Minister of Finance went so far as to say that hydro bills were going down.

Now the government has finally acknowledged the impact of their hydro policies and the hardship that people are facing as a result. While I'm pleased they have listened to the fact that people need relief, I am concerned about the approach that they are taking. Unfortunately Premier Wynne and her government have done nothing to address the problems that created the increased costs.

We know that some of the hydro cost increases were due to contracts for renewable energy that the government awarded at rates as high as 80 cents a Kilowatt hour and the fact that we have signed contracts for power we don't need which we are now paying other jurisdictions to take. However, the day after the government's hydro announcement the government proceeded with more new contracts for green energy which will simply make the problem worse.

I am also concerned that they are simply delaying payment for many of these costs which is adding \$25 billion in interest costs to the amount we will eventually pay -leaving our older selves and our children to pay for the problems this government has created. In fact in a call to an upset hydro ratepayer the Premier actually stated that the children who are in school today and going to have families in 10-15 years should be paying for these costs.

It is also concerning that although the government talks about amortizing the costs over 30 years many of these costs are not for government owned assets, but 20 year contracts with private sector companies. This means that we will be paying for the power for 10 years after it was used. This government needs to realize not just that we have a crisis in hydro, but how we ended up here. They need to stop signing new contracts for power that we don't need and can't afford. They need to review existing contracts to see if there are savings. They need to address the exorbitant salaries of hydro executives - including the CEO who earns up to \$4 million per year -and they need to stop the sale of hydro one.

I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their hydro stories with me and assure you I will continue to push the government to take real action to address the causes of these increases.

Smoking out investors; Provinces considering carbon pricing watch Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction

Daily Observer (Pembroke)

Wed Mar 22 2017

Ontario's cap-andtrade system aimed at lowering greenhouse gas emissions begins in earnest

Wednesday with its first auction, which other provinces said they will be watching closely as they consider their own carbon pricing plans.

The provincial Liberal government hopes the auction - held every three months - will bring in \$1.9 billion a year, or \$8 billion by the end of 2020, to be invested in programs that reduce emissions and help businesses and consumers adapt to a low-carbon economy.

Under the plan, businesses will have limits - or caps - on the amount of pollution they can emit. Companies that exceed those limits, which will be reduced each year, can buy permits or allowances through auctions or from other companies that come in under their limits.

The cap-and-trade system, which came into effect Jan. 1, added 4.3 cents per litre to the price of gasoline and about \$80 a year to natural gas home heating costs, in addition to indirect costs that will be passed onto consumers.

The Opposition Progressive Conservatives have been critical of those added costs and party leader Patrick Brown said Tuesday he would instead bring in a "revenue negative" carbon tax, with which any increased costs to consumers would be more than offset by tax cuts.

A government-commissioned analysis showed that a carbon tax would achieve more emission reductions - almost half through businesses leaving Ontario - but cost more, and an unlinked cap-and-trade model would be the most expensive option.

Ontario plans to link its cap-and-trade system with a joint Quebec-California market next year. But when that happens, an estimated \$466 million will leave the Ontario economy over three years, because it will be cheaper to buy allowances in those jurisdictions, the auditor general has said. Both the environmental commissioner and the auditor have said that means greenhouse gas emissions won't actually be cut in Ontario.

The most recent Quebec-California joint cap-and-trade auction saw just 18 per cent of allowances sold, with previous results of 88 per cent, 35 per cent and 11 per cent.

Ontario Environment Minister Glen Murray couldn't comment on his province's expected results so close to the auction, but has previously said he didn't think Ontario's market would see the same problem of oversupply, because the number of available allowances will decline at a more aggressive rate.

Ontario is capping emission allowances at roughly 142 megatonnes this year, declining about four per cent each year to 2020, when the Liberals hope to have achieved a 15-per-cent reduction in

greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels.

As the emissions cap declines, the government hopes companies have more incentive to invest in technologies that cut their emissions.

Carbon market expert Nicolas Girod said he expects the first auction to be close to fully subscribed. However, some businesses may sit this one out and some may be waiting until the market is linked with the California-Quebec one, he said.

“There will be ... excess allowances in California, so they may be cautious about buying in this first auction, or they may not be willing to buy (at) too high a price in this first auction because they know that there will be excess allowances from California coming next year,” said Girod, responsible for trading and research at Clear Blue Markets.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said all provinces must set up a cap-and-trade system or impose a price on carbon of at least \$10 per tonne starting next year. In Ontario, the floor price on carbon is expected to be set for auctions at between \$17.50 and \$18 per tonne, though demand could push the price higher.

Provinces without a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system are weighing their options and some say they will be closely watching Ontario's results.

Nova Scotia's Liberal government is proposing a capand-trade system but isn't currently planning to link its market. It is opting instead for trading of credits among emitters within the province and proposing to not make polluters pay the full cost for the greenhouse gas emissions that are over the capped limits.

Jason Hollett, the executive director of Noca Scotia's climate change division, said the plan is to distribute credits “for free ” to carbon emitters, because the province has already met Ottawa's targeted emission requirements due to changes to its electricity generation.

Most large emitters in Ontario will receive allowances for free until 2020, which the government says is meant to prevent them from moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing.

Newfoundland and Labrador will watch what happens in Ontario and may consider a capand-trade system in the future, said Perry Trimper, the minister responsible for the office of Climate Change. Emissions caps are being set in that province and emitters who go over them will be required to invest in a low-carbon technology fund being run by the government, or find ways to reduce their emissions.

"I must say I'm hoping for the best for them and we see an opportunity in the future to join jurisdictions like Ontario and Quebec in a cap-and-trade system," Trimper said.

Ontario's results will be made public on April 3. - files from Michael Tutton

Provinces eye Ontario's cap-and-trade auction; May be blueprint for carbon-pricing as other jurisdictions face new federal rules

Windsor Star

Wed Mar 22 2017

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"I must say I'm hoping for the best for them and we see an opportunity in the future to join jurisdictions like Ontario and Quebec in a cap-and-trade system," Trimper said.

Ontario's results will be made public on April 3.

How Ontario's Cap-And-Trade System Works: A Few Basic Details

Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction takes place on Wednesday. Here is a basic explanation on how the cap-and-trade system is expected to work. Ontario has set a greenhouse gas emissions cap of roughly 142 megatonnes for 2017. Companies that pollute at least 25,000 tonnes per year will have to have a number of allowances equal to their emissions.

One allowance is equal to one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent. The allowances will be available for purchase at quarterly auctions. Businesses can also buy and sell credits to each other on a secondary market. Most large emitters will receive allowances for free until 2020, which the government says is meant to prevent them from moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing. Fuel distributors and electricity importers will not receive the free allowances.

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Companies can also get some early reduction credits for work already done to reduce emissions. Cap-and-trade proceeds are directed to a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account to fund green projects such as home and business retrofits.

PC motion to halt Liberal hydro ads defeated

CANOE

2017-03-21

A Progressive Conservative motion to halt the Liberal government's taxpayer-funded hydro ad campaign was defeated on Tuesday.

PC deputy leader Steve Clark made the bid to dump the campaign, which so far has featured radio and social media advertisements. His motion required unanimous consent of all MPPs and was rejected by the government.

Tory leader Patrick Brown slammed the government for not putting an immediate stop to the campaign.

"The question everyone asks is, how much more?" he said. "How many millions is this government going to spend of hard-earned taxpayer dollars for their own partisan purposes? My question is to the Premier. Do you really think it's right to use taxpayer dollars to run partisan ads? It's wrong. Stop it."

Liberal House leader Yasir Naqvi defended the government ads, accusing the PCs of distracting from the fact that they don't have a plan to tackle hydro rates.

"They are actually really confused, and given that they have no plan, they are relying on procedural tactics, denying opportunities for Ontarians to have access to important information that will ensure that they know exactly the kinds of steps the provincial government is taking — that is, to reduce their hydro rates by 25%," he said.

NDP says energy costs a threat to health care; Expense more than doubled at St. Joseph's Healthcare from 2010 to 2016

The Hamilton Spectator

Wed Mar 22 2017

Rapidly rising electricity costs for Ontario hospitals are a threat to health care, warns provincial NDP Leader Andrea Horwath.

A prime example, Horwath noted in the Ontario legislature Tuesday, is Hamilton's St. Joseph's Healthcare, which has seen its electricity costs more than double from 2010 to 2016.

During those six years, electricity costs at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton rose from almost \$4 million in 2010 to \$8.1 million in 2016, an increase of 105 per cent, based on numbers

obtained by the NDP through a freedom of information request.

The figures include St. Joe's Charlton Avenue site, King Street East site and the West 5th site.

Part of the reason for the whopping increase at St. Joe's was the replacement of the West 5th site with a new building in early 2014 that is twice the size of the previous facility on the Mountain.

Even still, St. Joe's saw its average price paid for a kilowatt-hour jump from 10.2 cents in 2010 to 16.4 cents per kwh in 2016.

The NDP canvassed nine hospital systems in Toronto, Hamilton, London and Windsor.

The nine hospitals surveyed by the NDP plus Hamilton Health Sciences, which provided its figures to The Spectator, paid about \$15.5 million in extra electricity costs combined in 2016 compared to 2010.

Added together, their electricity costs went from \$33.4 million to \$48.8 million in six years, an increase of 46 per cent.

"Every dollar spent on these rising electricity costs is a dollar that's not spent on patient care," Horwath said in an interview.

"It's going to impact their ability to provide the kind of care they want to provide to patients," said the MPP for Hamilton Centre.

"We've seen front-line health-care workers being laid off," she added. "There's been 1,500 registered nurses given the pink slip since January of 2015.

"That's a lot of registered nurses to be walking the sidewalk."

A spokesperson for St. Joe's said the hospital requires large amounts of energy to run equipment such as MRI and CT scanners and operating rooms in addition to providing heat and lighting.

"Like all hospitals, we continually face inflationary pressures and increasing costs," stated Karen Langstaff, chief of facility planning and patient support services at St. Joe's.

"The additional cost of hydro is a very significant additional yearly inflation cost that we must manage if we are to balance our budgets."

At Hamilton Health Sciences' seven sites, electricity costs from 2010 to 2016 shot up by more than 50 per cent, even though electricity consumption at HHS dropped by more than a third.

Electricity costs for HHS went from \$2.6 million in 2010 to \$4 million in 2016 while consumption dropped from 35 million kilowatt-hours to 23 million kwh.

Chris Cuthbert, manager of co-generation and energy for HHS, said higher energy costs put more pressure on hospital budgets, which tend to get tighter each year.

"It's not like you can just shut the lights off when you've got patients in the building," Cuthbert said. "We've got less money to do other things because we're spending more money on electricity.

"The good thing is it's created a lot more will to conserve," Cuthbert said.

The numbers obtained by the NDP show significant increases in electricity costs at some hospitals even though consumption was sharply reduced over six years. At Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital, electricity costs at both sites rose by 21 per cent from 2010 to 2016, even though their electricity consumption dropped by 25 per cent.

Horwath said high electricity costs aren't just an issue for hospitals. During a recent tour of northern Ontario, she learned the town of Desbarats near Sault Ste. Marie may have to close its arena because of overwhelming energy costs.

Premier Kathleen Wynne announced earlier this month that residential ratepayers will receive an average 25 per cent cut to their electricity bills starting this summer. It will also affect half a million small businesses and farms. Rates will increase no higher than inflation for the next four years.

But the plan will ultimately cost ratepayers about \$25 billion more in interest, the government has said.

NDP says energy costs a threat to health care; Expense more than doubled at St. Joseph's Healthcare from 2010 to 2016

The Hamilton Spectator
Wed Mar 22 2017

Rapidly rising electricity costs for Ontario hospitals are a threat to health care, warns provincial NDP Leader Andrea Horwath.

A prime example, Horwath noted in the Ontario legislature Tuesday, is Hamilton's St. Joseph's

Healthcare, which has seen its electricity costs more than double from 2010 to 2016.

During those six years, electricity costs at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton rose from almost \$4 million in 2010 to \$8.1 million in 2016, an increase of 105 per cent, based on numbers obtained by the NDP through a freedom of information request.

The figures include St. Joe's Charlton Avenue site, King Street East site and the West 5th site.

Part of the reason for the whopping increase at St. Joe's was the replacement of the West 5th site with a new building in early 2014 that is twice the size of the previous facility on the Mountain.

Even still, St. Joe's saw its average price paid for a kilowatt-hour jump from 10.2 cents in 2010 to 16.4 cents per kwh in 2016.

The NDP canvassed nine hospital systems in Toronto, Hamilton, London and Windsor.

The nine hospitals surveyed by the NDP plus Hamilton Health Sciences, which provided its figures to The Spectator, paid about \$15.5 million in extra electricity costs combined in 2016 compared to 2010.

Added together, their electricity costs went from \$33.4 million to \$48.8 million in six years, an increase of 46 per cent.

"Every dollar spent on these rising electricity costs is a dollar that's not spent on patient care," Horwath said in an interview.

"It's going to impact their ability to provide the kind of care they want to provide to patients," said the MPP for Hamilton Centre.

"We've seen front-line health-care workers being laid off," she added. "There's been 1,500 registered nurses given the pink slip since January of 2015.

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But the plan will ultimately cost ratepayers about \$25 billion more in interest, the government has said.

Hydro rates: London Health Sciences Centre electricity use falls, but costs up 30 per cent

The London Free Press
2017-03-22

Add Ontario hospitals to the growing list of electricity users hit with soaring prices.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath spelled out the pain London Health Sciences Centre and other hospitals are feeling Tuesday in the Ontario Legislature.

Citing figures obtained through access to information requests, Horwath said LHSC's electricity bill ballooned by roughly \$2 million in the last six years even though the hospital group cut usage by 13 per cent.

"Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario," Horwath said. "There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills, hospitals are being squeezed tighter."

When questioned by Horwath in the legislature, Health Minister Eric Hoskins said the Liberals increased LHSC's operating budget by \$17 million.

"You've got your list and I've got mine," Hoskins said to Horwath.

The NDP's list included steep hikes in electricity bills for six large hospitals across the province, including LHSC and a campus at Windsor Regional Hospital.

The biggest increase was at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, where electricity costs more than doubled in six years.

At LHSC, the electricity bill for Victoria, University and South Street hospitals in 2010 was \$6.7 million. In 2016, the total rose to \$8.7 million, a 29 per cent increase.

LHSC administrators could not be reached Tuesday.

The NDP's revelations about the huge electricity cost increases for hospitals are another blow to the provincial Liberals, who recently cut delivery charges that sent bills soaring.

Struggling homeowners have made emotional public pleas for relief and churches and other agencies are reporting increased demand for help to pay power bills.

A Wallaceburg pastor said his church's benevolent fund has gone into overdraft three times in the last two years as people look for help.

Horwath said double-digit increases in electricity costs are hitting home at the province's hospitals.

"The Liberals also froze hospital budgets," she said. "It leaves a hospital system in a financial bind."

Hospitals are cutting staff, hours and technicians and privatizing food and cleaning services, Horwath said.

She called London "Ground Zero" in the province's health crisis.

"The minister of Energy and the minister of Health basically dodged the question," she said of when she brought up the issue in question period. She said the two cabinet members merely recited how much provincial cash has gone to facilities such as LHSC.

"The hospital system's in crisis, you better start giving them some money," Horwath said.

Every dollar being used to pay bloated power bills is a dollar diverted from patient care, she said.

Rather than fixing the system, Horwath said, the governing Liberals have instead simply refinanced it — jeopardizing the financial stability of future generations of Ontario residents. “This is a really big problem,” she said.

Premier Kathleen Wynne’s government has paid a steep political price for hydro rates exploding across the board — for businesses as well as individuals. In a Mainstreet Research Poll released last month, only 18 per cent of respondents approved of Wynne’s job performance.

LHSC Electricity Costs Jump Almost \$2M

Blackburnnews.com
2017-03-21

Despite a drop in electricity use, the hydro bill for London Health Sciences Centre has jumped 29% over a six-year period.

Between 2010 to 2016, the total annual hydro consumption dropped by 13%, however, the total billed amount for hydro rose from \$6,740,666 to \$8,694,742. The costs account for hydro use at Victoria, University and South Street hospitals.

“Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario... There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills, hospitals are being squeezed tighter,” said NDP Leader Andrea Horwath in a media release. “How can the hospital be expected to continue provide high quality patient care when Premier [Kathleen] Wynne is squeezing them like this?”

The cost information was obtained from LHSC through a freedom of information request by NDP Caucus Services. To view the document sent to the NDP, click [here](#).

On March 2, Wynne announced that her government would take action to reduce Ontarians’ hydro bills by a further 17%, on top of the 8% saving that resulted from the lifting of the provincial portion of the HST on hydro.

The NDP also released its hydro plan in late-February. The party claims it can cut hydro bills by 30% by scraping time-of-use premiums, cap profits for private producers, have rural residents pay the same delivery charges as city-dwellers, and reverse the sell-off of Hydro One.

WRH hydro bill up 50% in five years: NDP

CTV News
2017-03-21

Some startling data about electricity prices, and its impact on hospitals.

According to Ontario's New Democrats, the hydro bill at Windsor Regional Hospital has gone up

nearly 50 percent in five years.

The NDP cites data received from a Freedom of Information request that shows double digit increases in hydro bills for Windsor Regional, as well as for hospitals in London, Hamilton and at three facilities in the Toronto area.

According to the documents, the hydro bill for Windsor Regional has climbed from nearly \$1.8-million in 2011 to more than \$2.6 million in 2016.

Kevin Marshall, the Director of Corporate Services Facilities, admits their hydro costs have increased. But he suggests it's due to their aging facilities.

"Infrastructure at both campuses are quite old and that's why we're out to build a new hospital" says Marshall. "If you see what's happened at Humber hospital where they've added square footage, they've got a brand new hospital and they're using less energy than they did at their other sites."

The New Democrats argue the rise in energy costs is occurring at the same time the Liberal government is underfunding health care, and putting even more pressure on patient care.

Liberal plan to cut hydro rates leaves hospitals hung out to dry: NDP

CANOE
2017-03-21

The Liberal government's plan to slash hydro rates will offer no relief for Ontario hospitals, some of which have seen their bills go up by as much as 105%, says the NDP.

Andrea Horwath says documents released to the New Democrats through a Freedom of Information request show that many hospitals in the province have seen double-digit electricity cost increases over the last six years. That's valuable money being pulled from patient care and a new government plan to slash rates by 25% offers no reduction for hospitals, she said.

"If you're taking money from your operating budget to pay electricity bills instead of front-line patient care, then it's going to have an impact," she said. "Look, I think it's a disgrace what the Liberal's have done."

According to the documents, Toronto's University Health Network has spent \$6 million more on hydro since 2010, a 39% increase. Sinai Health System in Toronto has spent \$1.45 million more, a 48% rate jump. Toronto East Michael Garron Hospital's hydro bills have gone up by \$1.3 million or 67%.

Outside of Toronto the figures are also substantial. At Hamilton's St. Joseph's Healthcare, hydro costs are up \$4.16 million, or 105% in six years. At London Health Sciences Centre, hydro costs have jumped by \$2 million, or 29%. At Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus, hydro rates are up \$880,000 or 49% in five years.

The Liberal government announced three weeks ago that it would slash hydro rates by re-amortizing long-term energy deals. That means Ontarians will pay less for electricity in the short-term, but will pay an estimated \$25 billion in interest over the next 30 years for the short-term relief. But that plan doesn't include hospitals.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins downplayed the costs, saying they represent a small portion of the overall hospital budgets and none of the province's hospital CEOs have complained to him about the issue. But Hoskins couldn't say if the any targeted relief from hydro-rate increases would be offered to hospitals.

"For a hospital's operating budget, on average, electricity costs amount to roughly 1% of their budget," he said. "There's no doubt over the past years because of the fiscal situation the province has been in, hospitals have a number of challenges and we've been working with them on those challenges."

Horwath slammed Hoskins for not addressing the issue. The NDP plan to cut hydro rates by 30% would also slash costs to hospitals, according the party.

"It's unbelievable that they're not acknowledging the impact it's having on our hospitals," she said.

NDP Says Hydro Costs are Impacting Quality of Health Care

Source: CFPL

Mar 21, 2017 6: 09 PM (7)

Anchor: Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath says hydro costs are impacting the quality of health care, citing a number of examples including one here in London.

Andrea Horwath, NDP Leader: It's sad that hospitals that get a little bit of money after years of freezes are having to use that to fill a hole in their budget that the Liberal hydro plan has left them with, Speaker.

Anchor: Horwath says abscess to information documents show hydro costs have increased

dramatically for hospitals across the province, taking money away from patient care. Pointing to the access to information documents, she says hospitals that make up the London Health Sciences Centre have significantly reduced hydro use over the last six years. But they aren't seeing the financial benefits from their energy connection efforts. The Liberal government says the LHSC also saw significant funding increase last year.

Horwath: Hydro consumption dropped by 13 percent over the same six-year period that hydro bills went up by 29 percent. Does the Premier not understand how this would worry Londoners who depend on good quality care at their hospitals?

Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health: Well, Mr. Speaker, we could go on all day because I am happy to report that for London Health Sciences Centre, we increased their operating budget last year by over \$17 million. So you've got your list; I've got my list.

PC Leader Takes Issue with Liberal Party Flyers Promoting Hydro Reduction Plan

Source: CHCH

Mar 21, 2017 6:10 PM (6)

Anchor: The opposition accuses the Liberal government from blurring the line between government services and political statements. While the Ontario government radio ads are still on the air, earlier today, Liberal party members were handing out these flyers at transit stops. The flyers promote the Liberal government's hydro rate cut. The Liberal M.P.P. Deb Matthews says those flyers were paid for by political donations and are not out of the ordinary when an election is on the horizon.

Deb Matthews: This is political advertising. Other parties do this kind of event. Letting people know what we are doing. This is not government advertising at all. This is the Liberal party advertising.

Patrick Brown, PC Leader: The fact that that the Liberal party flyers are the same as -- you know, they are spending a few dollars of Liberal party pamphlets and spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buy. So yeah, they are ripping taxpayers off for their own partisan purposes.

Deputy Premier Clarifies Hydro Pamphlets Are Funded By Liberal Party

Source: Global

Mar 21, 2017 6:08 PM (16)

Anchor: Across Toronto during rush hour Tuesday the Ontario Liberals were busy handing out these pamphlets. On one side, it extols the virtue of the Liberal hydro rate reduction plan. On the other side, headlines, the big Liberal promise of 25 per cent off hydro. Now here on Global News, we have pointed out that the reduction from the so-called Fair Hydro Plan is actually 17

per cent, not 25 per cent, because the 8 per cent HST rebate is separate. It's already in place. But I'm going to try and let that go. Instead, you might be asking how much those pamphlets cost after the government spent close to \$1 million taxpayer dollars on these radio ads.

[Hydro Radio Ad]: Starting this summer, households in Ontario will receive an average of 25 per cent off their hydro.

Anchor: You know what? Let's do this. Every time you see a Liberal ad promising a 25 per cent cut, just shout out its 17! It will frighten and amuse people around you. But I digress. The fact is there is a difference between that radio ad and those pamphlets.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Ontario Premier: This is political advertising. Other parties do this kind of event, the blitz, letting people know what we're doing. And this is not government advertising at all. This is Liberal Party advertising.

Anchor: So 24 hours ago the Minister of Energy was defending spending public money to tell people about the hydro rate cuts, and now we have essentially identical advertising but this time paid for by the Liberal Party.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They're spending a few dollars of Liberal Party pamphlets and they're spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buys. They are ripping taxpayers off for their own partisan purposes.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader: The tactic that they took this morning is enough, I think, to have people nodding their heads in disgrace over the actions of this government.

Anchor: All of this political elbowing led to an overheated moment on the floor of the Legislature. PC Energy Critic Todd Smith was ejected for un-parliamentary language, but then as you can see here, that is him pointing his finger there. He decided to keep on going. Look at him, he is still going here after finally being escorted out. Now that led to this rebuke from the Speaker that every parent in the world will recognize.

Dave Levac, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this House. That goes for anybody. That's disrespectful and I won't tolerate it.

Anchor: As Ontario residents struggle to pay hydro bills, these kind of antics don't help anyone. Maybe we should just send all of them to bed without supper.

Liberals Facing Backlash From PCs Over Hydro Ads

Source: CFPL

Mar 21, 2017 6: 36 PM (21)

Anchor: Tense moments at Queen's Park today after the Speaker threatened to expel an MPP – something that is rarely done. It was all part of the charged-up debate surrounding the Liberal use of taxpayer dollars to fund radio ads promoting their hydro plan.

Glenn Thibeault, Energy Minister: They actually have no plan!

Reporter: The ruckus was well under way when the Speaker had enough and gave PC MPP Todd Smith the boot.

Dave Levac, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: The member from Prince Edward-

Hastings is named.

Reporter: Watch as an angry Smith refuses to leave. So upset over the Liberals spending tax dollars to promote their 25 per cent hydro cut, he stood his ground, pointed his finger, and yelled. This caused the Sergeant-at-Arms to approach and escort him out of the chamber, venting his frustration even as he was ejected.

House Speaker Levac: The member might not have known it, but he was very close to being expelled. That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this House. That goes for anybody. That's disrespectful, and I won't tolerate it.

Reporter: The PCs have accused the Liberal government for being in contempt of parliament for using taxpayers' money for radio ads to boast about their 25 per cent cuts to hydro bills when the legislation hasn't been passed yet. This is the latest promotional prop that is infuriating the opposition. The Liberal Party dispatched volunteers to Toronto subway stations this morning, handing out pamphlets to boost the hydro plan.

Unidentified: The Liberal party says hydro rates are rising too quickly. You're the reason hydro rates have been rising too quickly.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier: We made investments, and we're not ashamed of the investments we've made. We're proud that we have an electricity system that is an excellent system.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They don't seem to care what the Auditor General says. They don't seem to care that this is disrespectful to taxpayers, and they may be in contempt of parliament.

Reporter: The government says it has every right to advertise the 25 per cent hydro rate reduction to give families a chance to plan their budgets accordingly. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

MPP Todd Smith Was Escorted Out Of The Legislature During Hydro Ad Debate

Source: CFTO

Mar 21, 2017 6:17 PM (14)

Anchor: Some pretty tense moments at Queen's Park today. The Speaker threatened to expel an MPP, something that is rarely done.

Anchor: It was all part of the charged-up debate surrounding the Liberal use of taxpayer dollars to fund radio ads promoting their Hydro plan. CTV's Paul Bliss watching this closely for us. Paul, MPPs are often ejected for the day. What does it mean to be expelled?

Reporter: It means gone for the session, ejected until June. The Speaker told me this afternoon he came this close to making that order but he stopped short. That's a reflection of the testiness here developing over the Liberal Hydro plan.

Glenn Thibeault, Energy Minister: They actually have no plan!

Reporter: The ruckus was well under way when the Speaker had enough and gave PC MPP Todd Smith the boot.

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Reporter: The government says it has every right to advertise the 25 per cent Hydro rate reduction to give families a chance to plan their budgets accordingly. The NDP pointed out today the government is not offering Hydro rate relief to hospitals, and, in some cases, it's very expensive. Toronto East saw its Hydro bills go up 71 per cent in the last seven years, Mount

Sinai went up 45 per cent and the Hamilton Hospital, its bill has gone up 105 per cent in the last seven years. Reporting live at Queen's Park, I'm Paul bliss, send it back to you.

Anchor: Thank you, Paul.

MPP takes heat after 'demeaning' comment

Toronto Star

Wed Mar 22 2017

A Tory MPP is in hot water for suggesting a female nominee to the Ontario Energy Board do "something about this coffee" at Queen's Park.

Randy Pettapiece (Perth-Wellington) made the comment Tuesday morning during a standing committee meeting where Rumina Velshi, an engineer who has two master's degrees, was also present.

Liberal MPP Daiene Vernile said she and other MPPs were in "disbelief."

"I was compelled to jump in," added Vernile (Kitchener Centre). "This is a woman with incredible academic and professional credentials, and that he would order her to go to the kitchen - 'go to the kitchen,' he said - and do something about the coffee was demeaning, degrading and, I think, sexist."

Velshi is the mother of Alykhan Velshi, Tory leader Patrick Brown's new chief of staff. She told the Star via email that Pettapiece apologized to her after the meeting, and that she was not offended.

"It was a clumsy attempt at humour," she said. "During the committee meeting, his comments about my qualifications were entirely positive."

In a statement, Pettapiece said he was sorry about what was said. "They were made in the spirit of previous comments I, and other members, have made regarding the quality of the coffee. Nevertheless, I apologize to anyone I may have offended. Immediately following the committee proceedings, I apologized to Mrs. Velshi about the regrettable remarks."

Vernile said while "the coffee is not good in that committee - however to put that in front of Ms. Velshi is insulting . . . It was just inappropriate."

Town Council Investigating Wind Turbine Noise After MOE Fails to Take Action

Source: CFPL

Mar 21, 2017 6: 11 PM (9)

Anchor: Since the Minister of the Environment won't do it, a frustrated town council is planning to study the noise coming from a wind turbine on the edge Port Elgin. Saugeen Shores council says four years of foot dragging has led them to once and for all find out if indeed the Unifor wind turbine is too noisy. Scott Miller reports.

Reporter: It's that sound – times a hundred, that residents say keep them up at night and have led to 350 complaints since the turbine started spinning five years ago.

Greg Schmalz, ST.O.P the C.A.W Turbine: Most complaints are pretty well evenly spread between noise and health related complaints.

Reporter: Fed with up the response from Unifor, the owners of the turbine and the Ministry of the Environment, Saugeen Shores council has decided to go it alone and conduct their own noise testing this spring.

Luke Charbonneau, Saugeen Shores Deputy Mayor: There needs to be a comprehensive review of how the Ontario government is handling its regulations around wind turbines because there is a bunch of people out there experiencing problems, complaining about their operations and no redress from the government.

Reporter: Charbonneau is frustrated with how Unifor has handled the noise complaints, but is furious with the Ministry of the Environment for not doing their job. Council has got the Ontario Ombudsman office involved now. They are investigating whether the Ministry is properly enforcing noise regulations around the Unifor turbine and all 2,500 wind turbines in the province.

Charbonneau: You start to wonder what the motives of the government are. If their motives aren't to enforce the law or to ensure that their regulations are being followed, what are their motives?

Reporter: Unifor has this to say: "Unifor is currently compliant with all Ministry of the Environment requirements, but in the interests of an ongoing relationship with the community, the union is committed to complete an acoustic audit as soon as possible. At present, Unifor is waiting for long favourable weather conditions to do so." While there are no guarantees, Schmalz believes both audits will find what local residents have been complaining about: the Unifor turbine is too loud and should be turned off.

Schmalz: Across the province, testing of turbines is becoming a real issue. We have waited four others, and that result of that is people in Ontario are becoming energy voters in this coming election.

Reporter: If all goes according to planned, the dual testing will begin sometime this spring and last for about three weeks. The results should be available by the end of June. Saugeen Shores,

The Agenda: Panel On Premier Kathleen Wynne's Political Future

Source: TVO

Mar 21, 2017 8:01 PM (1)

Steve Paikin, Host: Whenever she's asked, Premier Kathleen Wynne always says she intends to leads the Liberals into the June 2018 election, but the polls, both the party and her personal approval levels are low and that's prompted a lot of speculation as to whether the Liberals might improve their fortunes next June with a different leader. Joining us now to consider the pros and cons of the Premier staying put, Tim Murphy, co-chair of the Liberals 2018 re-election campaign, Greg Sorbara, former Ontario Finance Minister, Ginny Movat, senior consultant with the government relations firm Crestview Strategy. Michael Taube syndicated columnist for Troy Media and the Washington times, and Ashley Csanady who covers politics with the National Post and it is good to have you all around the table here tonight at TVO.

Steve: Let's set this discussion up, Mr. Director, with the following numbers. The most recent poll we have for how Ontarians feel about all this is a Forum poll from the end of February. PCs at 44, NDP in second place at 25, statistically tied basically with the Liberals at 24, and the Greens at 6. Another forum poll from last week has the PCs with a 5-point lead over the Liberals in fortress Toronto, which is quite different. The Liberals have every seat except two in Toronto. The Premier's personal popularity is thought to be in the mid-teens, incidentally. Now, last week the Premier unveiled, or I guess this is a week and a half ago, a significant program to reduce electricity prices. After doing so, she was asked by Robert Benzie, the Queen's Park Bureau Chief for the Toronto Star, whether it was still her intention to lead the troops into the June election in 2018. Here is what the Premier said. Roll it.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: By summer, people who are struggling with their electricity costs are going to see that reduction. What that means in terms of their perception of me or the government is very much secondary because the people I've talked to, they're not – they're not raising these issues for political reasons. They're raising these issues because they're struggling with their electricity bills. So the fix that I put in place, that we put in place, has to address those very real burdens that people are carrying. [Mixed voices]

Unidentified: A follow-up quickly. That means you are going to stick around as Liberal leader and Premier until June 7th?

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Minister of Energy: Hope so.

Premier Wynne: Yes, I am. But they are two separate issues. They are two separate issues.

But, yes, I am.

Steve: "Yes, I am," she clearly said. And yet, Tim, this is going to sound like an odd first question because we are spending half the program on it tonight, but is this a story, in your mind?

Tim Murphy, Liberal Campaign Co-Chair: No.

Steve: Why not?

Tim Murphy: Because it's a stupid story. I talk to lots of liberals and not one of them wants her to go. Not a single one. In fact, you know, any process there was for an opportunity for the Liberal party to voice the view of something different, they categorically said we want her, the caucus wants her. You know, if you want someone running your campaign and election, who's a good campaign, who's smart, who's principled, who's a fighter, she is all of those things. And ask yourself: How well did it go for the Tory party when Mike Harris left and Ernie Eves came, or when Brian Mulroney left and Kim Campbell came in? The reality is, she is by far the best asset. And when I compare her to the opposition – now, we want to have a real show, let's talk about the mutterings we hear about Patrick brown among Tories which I don't hear about Kathleen Wynne among Liberals? But a guy when faced with that announcement couldn't come up with a coherent answer to a whole series of questions that created this Twitter and social media storm, including among Tories, oh, my god, what have we done? Let's have a story about Patrick brown. Then we've got a real show.

Steve: That's why I went to him first, okay. [Laughter]

Steve: Greg Sorbara, is this a real story?

Greg Sorbara, Former Ontario Liberal Finance Minister: Of course it's a real story. It's a real dilemma for Liberals, and Tim is going to run a great campaign, but the fact is that this is going to be a very difficult campaign, and, look, the numbers today are the same and getting worse than the numbers that we've seen over the course of the past year and a half or two years, and it doesn't look good for the Ontario Liberal party. There's a strange irony here, Steve, and that is that this government, this Liberal government, has done a really good job. Ontario has the strongest economy of all the provinces. Our schools are in good shape. Our health care system – we're having a little bit of a squabble with the doctors, but people are getting the health care that they need. We are involved in a huge amount of infrastructure construction right around Ontario. So things are very good. And I don't understand why the people of Ontario are so completely down on the Ontario Liberals, and particularly down on Kathleen Wynne. But the fact is, the numbers do not lie and the ability to win the next election is in grave, grave doubt.

Steve: Michael, is this a story?

Michael Taube, Troy Media: Well, with respect to Tim, yes, it is actually a story. I don't think it's stupid at all. In fact, I think it's actually something you need to discuss and look at. I look at the history, for example, of the Ontario PCs, who from 1943 to 1985 were the government in Ontario, and on average, every 10 years, they switched leaders. They adjusted things a little bit. It doesn't mean that the platform necessarily switched, but there was a new face, there was a new vision, it was a little bit more fresh. There is something to that. At the same time, I think that the Ontario Liberals realize, to say it in a non-partisan way, that Kathleen Wynne is a great asset to them because she is a really good campaigner. She understands people. She identifies with them. She is actually very good, not just in one-on-one settings, she is actually very good in group settings. That's an advantage that any leadership, no matter their ideological stripe is, should actually have. I don't think she is going any place, I think that is the consensus of everyone, even the two that haven't talked, because it doesn't make any sense at this point. There is no natural successor, there is no one else to go to.

Steve: That's not to say that there aren't people interested in the job.

Michael Taube: There are always people, there are always people with knives sitting in their pockets waiting to put it in someone else's back. We know how politics works. At the same time though, they believe she is an asset and they look at the last few elections that they looked like they were dead in the water, 2011, 2014, and somehow they survived. Maybe she can do it too.

Steve: Ginny what's your feel?

Ginny Movat, Crestview Strategies: I think Ontario is much more boring than places like Australia where people pull out the knives every six months and switches leaders. It's way more boring than that. Everybody wants there to be some crazy drama, and there are reasons for the Liberals to be concerned, certainly, and I think where Greg's wrong is that things aren't so good for a lot of people. In Toronto, people are doing pretty well. But outside of Toronto, people are not doing well, and finally, in the last few months, the Premier has started to acknowledge it. The question is: Is that going to cut through? So far I don't think Ontarians believe that the Premier cares about their personal pocketbook issues. They're going to their church to bail them out because they can't afford to pay their hydro bills. That was the story today in the newspaper. That is happening. But the Premier is – one of her strengths is that she can read as very compassionate. I think that's hard to do from Queen's Park. So we'll see. Will she go on tour and meet with people, look into their eyes, you know, make a commitment to make things get better, and will they then see in the summer, when the air-conditioning units go on, are their hydro bills going to get better? That's the question.

Steve: Ashley, you're the one journalist around this group today. Is this a story?

Ashley Csanady, National Post: I think so. Because there's always that question when a leader's popularity gets to this point. Is there a time for the person to step aside? And if she's going to go, it needs to be logistically in the next few months so they have time for a leadership race and time for another leader to get through a legislative session and introduce a budget. That said, do I think that any of the rumblings are particularly credible that she is going to go? No. You're actually only the second Liberal that I've gotten to say that they think she (a) Should go or (b) Is even a possibility –

Greg Sorbara: I didn't quite say that. We'll get to that later.

Ashley Csanady: You're only the second person who has even said to me that remotely they should be considering it. Every single other person I've talked to about this issue is, no, she is going to stay on, she is a fighter, as Tim said, the best asset we have. I think the most realistic thing I've heard is that if she's going to go, the few mutterings of discontent are basically waiting to see what happens by early summer. If this hydro cut resonates and if the numbers start going upward, she is definitely staying put.

Steve: We're going to follow up on those things, both timing and electricity price cuts in a second. However, Mr. Sorbara, I want to go back to you. You've been part of the Liberal party for 35 years. You're a former Finance Minister, former MPP, former party president –

Greg Sorbara: Campaign president – no, campaign chair. I've done it well. Not very well, by I did it all.

Steve: Does the Premier call you for advice?

Greg Sorbara: No.

Steve: Number two, if she did call you for advice and said, "Okay, Greg, you know my abilities. You see the numbers. You see what the potential is. What should I do?" What would you say?

Greg Sorbara: Well, I think I would say this: "The – I think I would say that it is extremely unlikely that you'll win the next election." I mean, the facts are the facts. The numbers are out there. They have been very bad. I have not seen, and followed politics for 40 years, a party in the last year of its mandate turn numbers around when the numbers are as bad as they are, and they're particularly bad for her. And there are not a few rumblings among a few malcontents. There are a whole lot of people in the Ontario Liberal Party who think it's all over. The party is without funds. It doesn't have enough money to run a campaign right now, and the government changed the rules so that it's going to be very difficult to raise that money. So, unless things changes dramatically, the Ontario Liberal Party, sadly, is going to lose the next election. And if that

happens, the Premier will resign after that and there will be a leadership and a renewal of the person at the top. So, I would say you have to ask yourself, Premier, whether, given that scenario, it's better to step down before the next election, and do what Dalton McGuinty did and let someone else give it a try, or to stay and try and pull it through. But I've talked to a lot of Liberals who are, frankly, despondent about their prospects. Sitting members and ministers who say, "If the election were held today, I'd come in third."

Steve: But the election isn't today.

Greg Sorbara: And the question, the big unknown is, "Can you turn it around in a year?"

Steve: It's more than that. It's 15 months.

Greg Sorbara: Yeah, but it's – okay, it's 15 months. I hope so, but I have not seen a government party do that, frankly, ever.

Steve: A lot to take on there. Tim, go.

Tim Murphy: I've been at many campaign meetings where Greg said things were quite a bit different than what he just said, or Mr. Chancellor, I guess. I mean, we had Dalton McGuinty went through, you know, '99, 2003, 2011 – or 2007, 2011, and there are at least – one of those he lost and two of those people thought he was going to lose. He went through all of them. He did lose one, but he lost a bunch and Greg was at the helm –

Steve: He won a bunch, you mean?

Tim Murphy: Sorry, he won a bunch –

Greg Sorbara: He only lost one election.

Tim Murphy: Agreed. Lost one, won a bunch. Apologize for the [inaudible]. Greg was, you know, his campaign chair and party president and Finance Minister through much of that, and I'm sure heard a lot of mutterings about Dalton through some of that, especially at points in advance of the '07, '11 election. Having said that, you know, we are at low numbers in the polls right now. No question, I'm not going to deny that. That being said, I think there are 15 months and what we do know about Ontario politics and it's proven time and time again, is that the election actually matters, because frankly Ontarians don't pay a lot of attention in between elections to Ontario politics. Like, you can't get it – they don't write about it in the Globe and Mail, you know, it's barely on the news, maybe on local news, but they do pay attention to campaigns and make decisions during campaigns. And I actually am feeling pretty good about the comparison that will be made once people pay attention. We have work to do. I don't think there's any question, the hydro rate, and the pocketbook issue that hydro rates became kind of an exemplar for were a

challenge and a problem, which is why it needed to be addressed, and I think obviously there is an undercurrent of anxiety about pocketbook issues among Ontarians and I also agree there are regionally varying degrees of success in the economy in Ontario, and those have to be paid attention to. That all being said, when you sit there and think about, "Okay, if I can – if the voters are prepared to listen to her on those subject matters," which we think the hydro announcement creates room for that to be true, that among the three of them, the one most likely to have a plan, to be seen as having the ability to put it in place, to come up with some good ideas and implement it, is going to be her when compared to the other two, when faced with that choice.

Steve: That is the question, Ginny. Have people – for some politicians there comes a time where they tune you out and they stop listening. You don't know that until after they've lost. Do you think people are still listening?

Ginny Movat: No, people are not listening to Kathleen Wynne today. Can she re-engage them going into a campaign period? She's really, really engaging on the campaign trail. She is good in ads and she's good, like Michael said, one-on-one and in groups. The question is: Can they get past this long period of disengagement and frankly, despondence. It's not just disengagement, it's kind of a negative form of disengagement. "I'm fed up, I'm going to stop paying attention because there's nothing left this government can do for me." I don't think these people are stampeding to either the PCs or NDP. In polling, they're sort of parking their vote. So I think there's a huge amount of undecideds and sort of disinterested undecideds. The question is: Can she re-engage them on the campaign trail and what will her opponents do and how will they factor into this? We've seen Andrea Horwath campaign before. She is a strong personality, but I think there are weaknesses in her campaign team and her campaign approach. We've never seen Patrick Brown campaign before.

Steve: He has never –

Ginny Movat: He's a question mark and it's a scary question mark because it's an unknown for Liberals.

Steve: On that I want to go to Michael Taube because you gave an interview on Newstalk 1010 not too long ago in which you said, and let's keep in mind, you're a Conservative, you're a former Stephen Harper speech writer.

Michael Taube: Supposedly.

Steve: You were all over the leader of the Ontario PC Party for being sub-par in his performance, particularly as it related to the electricity pricing issue.

Michael Taube: That's right. I was.

Steve: Okay. So having said that, if you're Patrick Brown today, do you want Kathleen Wynne there or do you want to take on somebody else?

Michael Taube: That's an interesting question. I think that he would probably look at it this way: Yes, it was a bad interview. I called it, it was an unmitigated disaster. It really was.

Steve: Patrick Brown's interview with John Moore.

Michael Taube: Yeah, but I also said that the perception unmitigated disaster for an interview versus being an unmitigated disaster for a government could be two very different things. I think the voters are going to look at it a little bit differently. Certainly, I agree with Ginny. No one really knows what Patrick Brown would do as leader of a province. We don't know at this stage. Patrick has obviously had a long political career. He was in city politics in Barrie. He was a federal MP, ut never a Cabinet position. He basically was a backbencher, but he sat on committees and did different things.

Steve: Who does he want there?

Michael Taube: I think he does want Wynne. The reason is, because you're going to chomp at the bit. If you look at the history of politics, you look at poll numbers. Even though you have to take them with a grain of salt, you're looking at a Premier who is sitting at about 18 percent roughly in the polls, and as you showed the Forum Research Poll, they're way down to the PCs. Right now, everything looks advantageous. Here is where I would take a difference with Greg, although I appreciate the fact he was critical because I was critical of my guys, the Harper Tories at times. I remember the last federal election. Before it happened, Justin Trudeau and the Liberals were sitting in third place. The NDP actually, according to most opinion polls, led between eight to 12 months, give or take. Not exactly but roughly that sustainable. Where are we today? Justin Trudeau is the leader of this country.

Steve: Fair enough.

Michael Taube: Anything is possible. 15 months, quite frankly, Greg, is a long time. It really is. One day is a lifetime in politics. 15 months is much, much time.

Steve: We have one former Finance Minister with us right now. I want to quote from another. This is from Dwight Duncan who succeeded you as Finance Minister and sent me this email today: "People have underestimated her since she launched her provincial political career and I believe the opposition parties are doing that again. Ontario Liberals are not. If there is unrest in the caucus and party I have not heard it. I have not spoken to a single person who thinks anyone other than Kathleen should lead our party through the next election. While I wouldn't blame her if she decided to retire I am told by many that she is not going anywhere. That is a good thing for

the party and province.” Ashley, I want to follow up with you on that and find out whether in your conversations or what you hear from National Post people who cover Queen’s Park, how big, if any, is the groundswell among Liberals to drop her?

Ashley Csanady: I don't think there is a groundswell. I don't think you can even call it a swell – I spoke with a member of caucus just yesterday when I knew I was coming on this show about this and they said, you know, it's not an open discussion. Maybe there are a few people who are sort of looking – I mean, politics attracts ambitious people. There are people who of course would mull the idea of a leadership bid if she wants to go. There are people who are new who haven't been through, you know, a down in the polls before an election like some of the more veteran members of caucus. I mean, in 2011, I remember I was a brand new reporter for the Waterloo Record and the presumption was Tim Hudak was going to win and Dalton McGuinty was going down. You know, they squeaked out their minority and then Wynne won another majority. And I think people tend to make assumptions in between elections in Ontario politics. I think that's a very dangerous thing because I don't think people tune in to Ontario politics between elections very much, and quite often, people confuse what level of government is in charge of what, quite often. The big liability for Kathleen Wynne was the hydro file –

Steve: Well let's pick up on that, if I can. Sheldon, let's put this up because the government did announce a 25 per cent on average across the board rate cut to kick in June 1st and the initial indication was the public liked what it heard. 82 per cent surveyed said they somewhat or strongly approved of that announcement. Only 14 per cent disapproved. 78 per cent thought the rate cut would help their family budget. 67 per cent thought the rate cut would now make their electricity bills affordable. Greg, does this announcement change the Premier's political circumstances?

Greg Sorbara: Not much.

Steve: Really, not much?

Greg Sorbara: No, not much because the problem that she's facing is not on a particular issue. It's not about hydro. There is a mood around the province about changing the government, particularly one led by Premier Wynne. Again, I don't understand it. I don't agree with it. Michael mentioned the federal election, but, Michael, it was the very same thing in the federal election. The people of Canada, at the beginning of that election, said, 'We are getting rid of the Harper government.' They didn't know where they were going. And it surprised us all and made some of us very happy that it was with Justin Trudeau, and not with the other guy. But I sense the same mood in Ontario. It's not about hydro. It's not about rents. It's not about traffic. It's about changing the government. And if you go back, most of you cannot go back to 1994, but Tim and I can. Back in 1994 in Ontario, Bob Rae's government was toast, and his kids said, 'Dad, you're

toast. You're going to get defeated.' And my problem is that that same mood seems to be permeating, certainly outside of the Greater Toronto Area and now, with the polls in Toronto, it's really very scary. And the fact is that – I mean, you talked to some caucus members and I've talked to caucus members. When more and more of them realize, 'I'm maybe going to lose my job,' the discussion is going to get more intense. Unfortunately, really, the fact is, the party is out of time. Either they decide that they're going to have a leadership convention in September, or Kathleen is going to lead the party into an election. I hope she wins. I don't think she will, and she will have to step down after. And so the question that she has to confront all alone, walking in the snow, is, in the best interests of the many, should the one set her interests aside?

Steve: Tim, you are her co-chair.

Tim Murphy: Yeah.

Steve: For the upcoming campaign. Have you ever had that conversation with her?

Tim Murphy: No. And no need to. I'm not a fair weather friend of the Premier. My view is, both as – and let's understand one thing, right? I actually didn't support her in the leadership. I didn't know her at the time. I came to support her and see her up close and phenomenally by far, thank, frankly, god that we did elect her as leader of the party at the time because she is doing a great job for the province and a great job as leader of the party. So I look at – I have had those conversations with leaders, and I don't see the need to have it with her. Because when I kind of look at the record that she is assembling and the things that she can do and has done, I think she's got a phenomenal chance of winning the next election, and I disagree with Greg who is more influenced by the vagaries of today's poll than the prospects of what could be, which he used to be like, unfortunately.

Greg Sorbara: No, look. I am not a fair weather friend, and I did support Kathleen in the leadership race, and I think she has worked very hard and done a great job. I'm just analysing the harsh and unhappy political reality that my party confronts. You know, it's not all about protecting the interests of the leader; it's about what's in the best interests of the party.

Tim Murphy: Of course it is.

Steve: As you look at what's in the best interests of the Liberal party right now, which I know is something that doesn't come naturally to you –

Greg Sorbara: It will make you feel good.

Steve: What comes to mind?

Ginny Movat: The nice thing about being a centrist party, and particularly the Ontario Liberals, is

that you're not hamstrung by principle and fiscal responsibility – you can do, and the Liberals have done, really big things to try to keep government over the years, and we saw McGuinty do it. You know, there are a lot of people in this province that are either employed by the government, related to someone employed by the government, neighbour of someone who's employed by the government, and people who have been employed by the government have been doing really, really well in Ontario. A lot of people have their kids in full-day kindergarten. It was a crazy expensive program, but when people said think about it, they go, you know, Dalton McGuinty gave me free day care, basically. So if I were the Liberals, I'd be saying, if you elect another government, you will lose that. You will lose that special status. Now, for taxpayers that aren't employed by the government and that don't have kids in cradle-to-grave programs, it's actually not so great. They're the ones going to the churches to pay off their hydro bills. But the Liberals are not hamstrung by the kinds of things that you confront as a party on the left or a party on the right. They can, going into an election period, decide, 'hey, road tolls, we thought it was the right public policy thing to do. Oh, we've changed our mind because we saw some polling.'

Tim Murphy: That's what Patrick Brown did.

Ginny Movat: They're not reined in by having – and their party members will really move with them and do what has to be done, and Kathleen Wynne wants to win. Don't underestimate her wish to win. She'll do what it takes. She'll look at the polling and see what she can cut and wedge and she'll –

Steve: Well at the risk of incurring the wrath of our good friend Mr. Murphy at the end of the table here, obviously there are people in the Liberal Party who think that she needs to step down in order to refresh the brand in time for the next election. I want to pick up on your comment earlier about timing. That suggests that that decision, if it's going to be made, needs to be made in the next month because you have to have a leadership convention in the fall to leave the leader at least eight months to put a new coat of paint on this thing. Does that sound right?

Ashley Csanady: Yes, someone said to me June. If she's going to go, she has to make the call by June. She can prorogue the house and a leadership convention can be scheduled for September. They can bring things back a tiny bit later than they usually would and basically go through a budget cycle.

Steve: If you're Kathleen Wynne, you're sitting there looking across the floor of the Legislature and you're thinking, 'Okay, there's Andrea Horwath. I beat you once already. And there's Patrick Brown. You've never led a province-wide campaign. You have basically have no track record from 10 years in Ottawa. I think I can beat you too.' Why should she step down?

Greg Sorbara: Well I'm not – let's be clear, Steve. I'm not saying I think she should step down. I

think, amongst the three, she will wage the best campaign as a party leader. My view is, it's just not going to be enough this time around, like it wasn't enough for Bob Rae in '95, like it wasn't enough for Stephen Harper a year and a half ago. Sometimes it's just not enough. And my sense is that Ontarians – and if you go outside of the beautiful City of Toronto, my god, the anger is just palpable, calling for, you know, an end to this government. As a Liberal, it's very scary. So she'll run the best campaign. I don't think she's going to step down. I think she wants to take on the fight. She will be better than Patrick Brown. She will be much better than Andrea Horwath. But what is the result going to be? And if you contemplate that result, that makes you pose the question to yourself in slightly different terms. The issue is, if I step down and someone else steps in, does that person have a better chance of improving the overall prospects of the Liberal Party? And that's a question that no one can answer. I mean, Tim mentioned Brian Mulroney. Brian Mulroney stepped down and Kim Campbell stepped in. She was 52 per cent in the polls when that campaign began and she ended up with two seats. So it's unpredictable.

Steve: In our last minute, Tim, let me put that to you. I know you have said, you gave the example, Mulroney leaves, Campbell comes in. It's a disaster.

Tim Murphy: Or Harris and Eves.

Steve: Harris and Eves as well. On the other hand, you can give the example of Dalton McGuinty leaves, Kathleen Wynne comes in, saves the silverware.

Tim Murphy: I know. Thank god we had Kathleen Wynne.

Steve: Not bad. Not bad. But how do you know this isn't one of those moments where a new coat of paint is actually what the party needs?

Tim Murphy: Well because I think, you know, (a) – I can't remember who said it, but there are ambitious people in caucus and that is awesome. Like, we love having ambitious people in caucus. It's a great thing. We have some people who I think could be very good leaders at some future point, and we want them to want that job because that actually makes them better, more responsive, work harder – all of those things are good. So I think, you know – so I look out and see a lot of really good people and we think we're going to recruit some good people too because there are 15 additional seats that are being added. On the last election results, we'd win 11 out of those 15. That being said, we have growth to do from the current numbers. But I think – so, you know, at the end I look at this, and my view doesn't change, right? Because, as I said, I came into this process, you know, from Dalton's resignation, supporting Sandra Pupatello and Kathleen. So I'm kind of – yes, I have the strength of a convert, but nonetheless, you know, I look across that caucus and I think I have the same judgment most Liberals and most Liberals I talk to have, which is, she is going to be our best campaigner and the good of the party and frankly the good of the province is focused on getting her re-elected. Now, the voters may make

a different choice, and that is absolutely their right and entitlement, but we think with her in charge, we're going to have the best chance.

Steve: You have the last word, Mr. Murphy, and the drama continues. I thank everybody for coming onto TVO tonight and having this discussion about this non-story according to Mr. Murphy.

Tim Murphy: I hear there's a Patrick Brown one, I'll be here for that one.

Steve: We'll have you back for that too. Thanks, everybody.

All: Thank you.