

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

March 24, 2017

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PRINT COVERAGE

THE GLOBE AND MAIL: HYDRO RATES SHOCK WYNNE'S APPROVAL RATING

A6; 2017.03.24

ID: GAM.20170324.nwnahydropoll PUBLICATION: The Globe and Mail EDITION: Ontario
DATE: 2017.03.24 SECTION: News PAGE: A6 BYLINE: By SHAWN McCARTHY WORD
COUNT: 549 DATELINE: OTTAWA

Hydro rates shock Wynne's approval rating ;
Staff

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne has seen a historic slump in her job-approval ratings as Ontarians continue to fret over increased hydro bills and the sale of the Hydro One utility, says new polling by the Angus Reid Institute released Friday.

With a 2018 election looming, the provincial Liberal Premier has the endorsement of only 12 per cent of voters, down from a 41-per-cent approval rating just 18 months ago, the Angus Reid Institute survey revealed.

The institute's executive director, Shachi Kurl, said Ms. Wynne has sunk to depths almost never seen among provincial premiers in recent history, with only former British Columbia premier Gordon Campbell dropping below 10 per cent before he resigned in November, 2010.

"There is no way to sugar-coat this, it's not a good situation for the Premier," Ms. Kurl said. "But clearly, based on what we're seeing and hearing, there may be some continuing belief that the Premier herself, or the party can turn things around" before an election that is scheduled for June, 2018.

In surveying premiers' approval ratings, the Angus Reid Institute polled 5,404 Canadians, including 804 Ontario residents. The survey was conducted between March 6 and March 13, just after Ms. Wynne's government announced it would reduce hydro rates by an average of 25 per cent for households, and more for people in rural areas and small towns that were hardest hit by rate hikes over the past decade.

"I would suggest people really hadn't had the opportunity to absorb whether or not they feel this is something that will credibly give them some relief, and whether or not it is enough at this stage," Ms. Kurl said.

Most premiers saw a decline in their approval ratings this month compared with last December.

Saskatchewan's Brad Wall – who continues to rank as the country's most popular premier – saw his support drop to 52 per cent from a recent high of 66 per cent last May. British Columbia's Christy Clark – who faces an election in May – had an approval rating of just 31 per cent, down 4 percentage points from December amid revelations of her Liberal Party's controversial fundraising tactics.

But none are even approaching Ms. Wynne's 12 per cent. And Ms. Kurl suggests voters' anger over soaring hydro rates is a big factor.

Average residential rates have doubled in the past decade, and risen ever further in less-densely populated and remote regions.

Three-quarters of Ontario respondents (74 per cent) describe their household energy bills as “unreasonable” and a similar number expect the Hydro One sale to increase their rates even further. (Hydro One is the province’s main transmission utility that also directly serves households in rural Ontario.)

Indeed, 27 per cent of respondents identified “energy/electricity” as the largest problem facing the province, with “the economy” a distant second at 16 per cent. And more than three-quarters of respondents said their household electricity bills and the sale of Hydro One would be important or somewhat important issues for them when they vote in the 2018 provincial election.

However, 62 per cent said they would factor in the Wynne government’s plan to reduce hydro bills when they go to the polls in the general election.

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WOODSTOCK SENTINEL-REVIEW: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Woodstock Sentinel-Review
PAGE: A4
DATE: 2017.03.24
SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Brian Platt
SOURCE: Woodstock Sentinel-Review
KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social
WORD COUNT: 596
Ontario Liberals make era of fake news worse
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THE SAULT STAR: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A6; 2017.03.24

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DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: The Sault Star

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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KINGSTON WHIG-STANDARD: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

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BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: The Whig-Standard

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WORD COUNT: 596

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WELLAND TRIBUNE: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

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DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Welland Tribune

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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SIMCOE REFORMER: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

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PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Simcoe Reformer

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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LONDON FREE PRESS: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A9; 2017.03.24

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PAGE: A9

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: London Free Press

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 594

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LONDON FREE PRESS: HYDRO ADS DON'T HINDER PROCESS, RULES SPEAKER

A5; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: London Free Press

PAGE: A5

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

KEYWORDS: speaker, legislature, government, planned, hydro, reductions

DATELINE: TORONTO

WORD COUNT: 140

Hydro ads don't hinder process, rules Speaker

The Speaker of Ontario's legislature says government ads about planned hydro bill reductions are not in contempt of parliament.

The Progressive Conservatives had complained that the ads tout a reduction on hydro bills coming this summer as a done deal, when no legislation has been passed or even tabled yet.

But government house leader Yasir Naqvi argued that because no legislation has been introduced, the ads don't interfere with any legislative proceedings.

Speaker Dave Levac ruled today that he cannot "interpret or presume what might be in that possible legislation," so a case for contempt couldn't be established.

Both the Tories and NDP say the taxpayer-funded radio and social media ads are only meant to boost the popularity of a party sagging in the polls.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault has said it's important to inform people of upcoming hydro relief.

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LONDON FREE PRESS: WINTER HYDRO DISCONNECT BAN STILL ONLY HALF REVERSED

A5; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: London Free Press

PAGE: A5

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

KEYWORDS: ontario,energy,board,month,winter,electricity

DATELINE: TORONTO

WORD COUNT: 175

Winter hydro disconnect ban still only half reversed

The Ontario Energy Board says that one month after a ban on winter electricity disconnections took effect, about half of the affected customers remain disconnected.

The provincial government last month banned electricity distribution companies from disconnecting people's electricity for nonpayment during the winter.

Service had to also be restored "as soon as possible" to anyone who had their electricity disconnected or load limited because they didn't pay their bill.

The OEB says when the ban went into effect, on Feb. 23, 845 residential customers were disconnected and 831 had load limiters.

Its most recent information shows 407 customers have had their power reconnected. Fewer than 150 customers still have load limiters.

Progressive Conservative Todd Smith said winter disconnections were supposed to end a month ago. "Yet we still see people with no power in cold temperatures," he said. "It's shameful and it's sadly just another broken promise from this government." New Democrat France Gelinis said all three parties came together to quickly pass the legislation and she expected the reconnections to happen a lot faster.

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LONDON FREE PRESS: TURBINE PROJECT 'SLAP IN THE FACE'; RURAL RESIDENTS PROTEST PLANNED CONSTRUCTION OF 16 TO 20 TURBINES DESPITE STRONG VOTE OPPOSING IT

A2; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: London Free Press

PAGE: A2

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Local

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Jonathan Juha

SOURCE: Postmedia News

KEYWORDS: approved,province,residents,rural,township,still

ILLUSTRATION: Mike Hensen, The London Free Press / Darryl Chrisjohn of Oneida made an impassioned speech at a protest against wind turbines in Dutton Dunwich on Thursday. Chrisjohn said that only the natives from Six Nations had a right to make deals about their land, and that the fight against wind turbines should unite local communities and the reserves.;

DATELINE: DUTTON

WORD COUNT: 525

Turbine project 'slap in the face'; Rural residents protest planned construction of 16 to 20 turbines despite strong vote opposing it

A year after it was approved by the province, residents of a London-area rural township are still fighting against a wind farm that's going ahead despite an overwhelming local vote against such projects.

Thursday, more than 60 people gathered at the Dutton Community Centre during one of two public meetings, organized by Chicagobased Invenergy, to protest against what they say is another broken promise by the Liberal government and a violation of their rights.

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The government "has admitted already many times that they have made mistakes when it comes to the energy sector, so hopefully, they will wake up and realize this is another mistake." COPYRIGHT: © 2017 Sun Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

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THE TIMMINS DAILY PRESS: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Timmins Daily Press

PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: The Timmins Daily Press

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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THE TIMMINS DAILY PRESS: MINISTER DEFENDS PLAN AS MORE FAIR TO HYDRO USERS

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Timmins Daily Press

PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Glenn Thibeault,

SOURCE: The Timmins Daily Press

KEYWORDS: march,premier,wynne,announced,lower,residential

DATELINE: Ontario

WORD COUNT: 606

Minister defends plan as more fair to hydro users

On March 2, Premier Wynne announced a plan that will lower residential hydro bills by an average of 25% starting this summer. This significant reduction in rates will go to every household in Ontario with no asterisks, loop holes or exceptions. And your bill won't increase beyond inflation for at least four years.

I don't have to tell you why this is needed. I have heard from people across our province struggling to deal with bills that have gone up too much and too quickly. Household budgets are stretched. Something needed to be done.

What I want to share is how we got to this point, how we're fundamentally restructuring the system to give you the biggest rate cut in Ontario history, and why you can be certain that this change is going to be lasting.

For a long time, Ontario enjoyed one of the best electricity systems around. But for decades, governments of all stripes stopped investing. About 15 years ago, those quick-fixes caught up with us. Brownouts, blackouts and dirty coal plants were a danger to our health, our environment and our economy.

So, we closed all of Ontario's coal plants, built new transmission lines and invested in renewable energy. We now have a clean, reliable system that is going to benefit us for decades. But that came at a price. And the terms we set to finance these necessary renovations weren't fair.

In effect, we put the \$50 billion cost of the rebuild onto the hydro bills of just one generation. That was a mistake. It meant high bills because you were paying for past neglect and subsidizing ratepayers who will benefit from these energy assets for years to come. By stretching those costs out over a time-frame that better reflects the lifespan of the assets we're paying for, we can lower everyone's bills today and keep them from jumping back up. That's the fairer way forward.

We have also been asking ratepayers to pay for things that should really be part of the province's budget. Our program to help low-income families afford hydro is one example.

But I want to highlight the Rural or Remote Rate Protection program. The RRRP helps subsidize the high cost of delivering electricity to 350,000 rural residential customers. We're taking the

cost of the program off bills and enhancing it so that now about 800,000 homes will qualify for lower delivery charges.

Hydro is a necessity. But for many of us living in the North, high delivery charges were leading to impossible choices between groceries, rent or electricity. That's not right. With this change, everyone in Ontario is going to be paying roughly the same in delivery charges. Again, it comes down to fairness.

As you can imagine, these huge and lasting structural fixes do come with a cost. We can afford it because of Ontario's strengthening economy, which is the fastest growing in Canada. After a decade of deficits, the provincial budget will be balanced this year. Our recovery is on track, but it hasn't been evenly shared. Many families I speak to, whether in Sudbury or Timmins or Sault Ste Marie tell me they aren't any better off than they were before the recession. It is why our team is determined to make sure growth in our economy means more opportunity and security for people in our community and all across Ontario. Using the province's new-found fiscal strength to give everyone the break they need on their hydro bills is the right thing to do for the province and the fair thing to do for your family.

Glenn Thibeault

Ontario Minister of Energy

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SARNIA OBSERVER: TURBINE PROJECT 'SLAP IN THE FACE'; RURAL RESIDENTS PROTEST PLANNED CONSTRUCTION OF 16 TO 20 TURBINES DESPITE STRONG VOTE OPPOSING IT

B7; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Sarnia Observer

PAGE: B7

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Jonathan Juha

SOURCE: Postmedia News

KEYWORDS: approved,province,residents,rural,township,still

ILLUSTRATION: Mike Hensen, The London Free Press / Darryl Chrisjohn of Oneida made an impassioned speech at a protest against wind turbines in Dutton Dunwich on Thursday. Chrisjohn said that only the natives from Six Nations had a right to make deals about their land, and that the fight against wind turbines should unite local communities and the reserves.;

DATELINE: DUTTON

WORD COUNT: 525

Turbine project 'slap in the face'; Rural residents protest planned construction of 16 to 20 turbines despite strong vote opposing it

A year after it was approved by the province, residents of a London-area rural township are still fighting against a wind farm that's going ahead despite an overwhelming local vote against such projects.

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A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Sarnia Observer

PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Sarnia Observer

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

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PETERBOROUGH EXAMINER: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

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PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Peterborough Examiner

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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OWEN SOUND SUN TIMES: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

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PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

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BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Owen Sound Sun Times

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

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THE CHATHAM DAILY NEWS: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A5; 2017.03.24

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BYLINE: Brian Platt
SOURCE: The Chatham Daily News
KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social
WORD COUNT: 596
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THE CHATHAM DAILY NEWS: WINTER HYDRO DISCONNECT BAN STILL ONLY HALF REVERSED

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Chatham Daily News

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DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

KEYWORDS: ontario,energy,board,month,winter,electricity

DATELINE: TORONTO

WORD COUNT: 175

Winter hydro disconnect ban still only half reversed

The Ontario Energy Board says that one month after a ban on winter electricity disconnections took effect, about half of the affected customers remain disconnected.

The provincial government last month banned electricity distribution companies from disconnecting people's electricity for nonpayment during the winter.

Service had to also be restored "as soon as possible" to anyone who had their electricity disconnected or load limited because they didn't pay their bill.

The OEB says when the ban went into effect, on Feb. 23, 845 residential customers were disconnected and 831 had load limiters.

Its most recent information shows 407 customers have had their power reconnected. Fewer than 150 customers still have load limiters.

Progressive Conservative Todd Smith said winter disconnections were supposed to end a month ago. "Yet we still see people with no power in cold temperatures," he said. "It's shameful and it's sadly just another broken promise from this government."

New Democrat France Gelinias said all three parties came together to quickly pass the legislation and she expected the reconnections to happen a lot faster.

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THE CHATHAM DAILY NEWS: TURBINE PROJECT 'SLAP IN THE FACE'; RURAL RESIDENTS PROTEST PLANNED CONSTRUCTION OF 16 TO 20 TURBINES DESPITE STRONG VOTE OPPOSING IT

A4; 2017.03.24

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PAGE: A4
DATE: 2017.03.24
SECTION: News
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Jonathan Juha
SOURCE: Postmedia News
KEYWORDS: approved,province,residents,rural,township,still
DATELINE: DUTTON
WORD COUNT: 525

Turbine project 'slap in the face'; Rural residents protest planned construction of 16 to 20 turbines despite strong vote opposing it

A year after it was approved by the province, residents of a London-area rural township are still fighting against a wind farm that's going ahead despite an overwhelming local vote against such projects.

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"That's what bugs people the most," Dutton Dunwich Mayor Cameron McWilliam said. "They don't want to have, as I call it, the 'province of Toronto' dictating to rural communities what to do."

James Murphy, vice president of business development for Invenergy, defended the project, saying it has received 75 per cent support from adjacent landowners to the site.

"We are well aware of the sentiment in the community and we are doing everything we can to help address it," he said.

Murphy said the company is still in the permit process and is expected to present a final application to the province this summer. If everything goes as planned, the company would begin in 2019 the construction of 16 to 20 wind turbines capable of generating a combined 57.5 megawatts of green energy, with the facility going online later that year.

Last fall, the Dutton Dunwich group circulated a petition among residents asking the government to reverse its decision of approving the project. Congdon said his group collected more than 1,400 signatures and the petition was sent to Premier Kathleen Wynne.

"We have to continue to believe that we can stop it from happening, and it's not something just for our community but for everyone in Ontario," Congdon said.

The government "has admitted already many times that they have made mistakes when it comes to the energy sector, so hopefully, they will wake up and realize this is another mistake."

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STRATFORD BEACON-HERALD: TURBINE PROJECT 'SLAP IN THE FACE'

A2; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Stratford Beacon-Herald

PAGE: A2

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Jonathan Juha

SOURCE: Postmedia News

KEYWORDS: approved,province,residents,rural,township,still

DATELINE: DUTTON

WORD COUNT: 525

Turbine project 'slap in the face'

A year after it was approved by the province, residents of a London-area rural township are still fighting against a wind farm that's going ahead despite an overwhelming local vote against such projects.

Thursday, more than 60 people gathered at the Dutton Community Centre during one of two public meetings, organized by Chicagobased Invenergy, to protest against what they say is another broken promise by the Liberal government and a violation of their rights.

"Everything about it is a slap in the face, especially when you look at what is happening to our hydro bills," said Dave Congdon of Dutton Dunwich Opponents of Wind Turbines, a community group opposed to the project that organized Thursday's demonstration.

"As a democratic society we voted in opposition of this (project) and yet here we are still fighting them. ... it doesn't seem to matter that we don't want (the turbines)."

Dutton Dunwich, in Elgin County, in 2014 became Ontario's first municipality to hold a referendum asking residents their opinion on such mega-projects.

More than half the residents took part, with 84 per cent voting against the wind farms.

Last year the province gave Invenergy the green light to proceed with the project, called the Strong Breeze Wind Farm, in part thanks to the support of six Ontario First Nations groups, one of them located 1,000 kilometres and a time zone away from the municipality.

One local First Nations man at the rally said outside aboriginal communities have no business in Dutton Dunwich's affairs.

"They have no right and no say in bringing corporations to this land," said Darryl Chrisjohn, a member of the Oneida Settlement near Dutton Dunwich. Protestors say the provincial Liberals are ignoring residents.

"That's what bugs people the most," Dutton Dunwich Mayor Cameron McWilliam said. "They don't want to have, as I call it, the 'province of Toronto' dictating to rural communities what to do."

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TORONTO SUN: STILL FREEZING IN THE DARK; MANY DISCONNECTED CUSTOMERS REMAIN WITHOUT POWER

A10; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Toronto Sun

PAGE: A10

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Shawn Jeffords

SOURCE: With Files From The Canadian Press

KEYWORDS: customers,hydro,winter,remain,month,ontario

COLUMN: Political Bureau Chief

WORD COUNT: 385

Still freezing in the dark; Many disconnected customers remain without power

Half of the customers who had their hydro cut off this winter remain in the dark a month after the Ontario government ordered companies to restore their power.

And both opposition parties are slamming the Liberals for failing to light a fire under utilities to get them moving faster to connect them.

"Winter disconnections were supposed to end a month ago and yet we still see people with no power in cold temperatures," said PC MPP Todd Smith. "The Ontario Liberals only ended this crisis when opposition parties called them to account. Now they have not fulfilled their promise to turn people's power back on in good faith. It's shameful and it's sadly just another broken promise from this government."

NDP MPP France Gelinias said even with the winter disconnection ban, hundreds of Ontario residents are still suffering in the cold.

"This is something the government is on record saying they want fixed," she added. "Yet, so many poor, vulnerable Ontarians fall through the cracks."

Gelinias urged the government to step in and review the work of Ontario's energy distribution companies as they reconnect customers.

The Ontario Energy Board confirmed Thursday that one month after the legislature passed its bill banning winter cut-offs, about half of the affected customers are without still power.

The OEB says when the ban went into effect on Feb. 23, 845 residential customers were disconnected and 831 had load limiters.

Their most recent information shows that 407 of those customers had their power connected. Fewer than 150 customers still have load limiters.

OEB spokesman Lars Hansen said 25 electricity distributors have not yet been able to complete all the required reconnections.

"The OEB is proactively communicating with utilities," Hansen said in an e-mail. "We are requiring the utilities to provide further details about their progress and will take further action if it appears that a given distributor is not acting responsibly."

Colin Nikolaichuk, spokesman for Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault, said the OEB has informed the ministry that it has contacted all disconnected customers. Some, like cottage owners, have elected to not be reconnected.

"The OEB will continue to work closely with utilities to make sure that all customers who require reconnection are reconnected without delay," he said. "Anyone who hasn't been reconnected and wishes to should contact their local utility."

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THE CHRONICLE JOURNAL: NDP LEADER ANDREA HORWATH MADE A BRIEF STOP IN THUNDER BAY

2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle Journal

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Columns Comment.

KEYWORDS: leader, andrea, horwath, brief, thunder, recently

WORD COUNT: 834

[NDP leader Andrea Horwath made a brief stop in Thunder Bay recently to try and sell her half-baked p]

NDP leader Andrea Horwath made a brief stop in Thunder Bay recently to try and sell her half-baked plan to reduce electricity rates for Northwestern Ontario residents and businesses.

I feel compelled to point out the flaws in the NDP plan, and contrast that with our government's Fair Hydro Plan.

1. The NDP hydro scheme is very short of details. It talks about a vague and yet-to-be-determined "expert panel" that will be convened in the future, as well as pie-in-the-sky request for federal government to forgo its 5-per-cent cut of the HST.

In contrast, our government's plan will cut electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all families, small businesses and farms, including the 8-per-cent cut that kicked in Jan. 1, with the rest to follow this summer.

2. The NDP's most expensive idea - buying back more than \$4 billion in shares of Hydro One - will not take one cent off electricity bills.

The partial sale of Hydro One has nothing to do with the price we pay for electricity, and Horwath knows this. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) is an independent board in charge of setting electricity prices in Ontario. Utilities like Hydro One don't get to set their own prices - the OEB does that.

Buying back shares of Hydro One, over an eight-year period, would use money that's already earmarked for education, health care, and infrastructure in Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and would create a significant fiscal gap without any impact on electricity rates.

In contrast, our Fair Hydro Plan brings forward the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, helping families, small businesses and farms in the Thunder Bay area.

3. The NDP are suggesting that at some point, maybe 10 years down the road, they hope to reduce electricity rates by between 17-30 per cent. I must add that they are including the 8 per cent that our government has already reduced from electricity bills, as well as the 5 per cent federal portion of the HST.

In contrast, as stated earlier, our plan offers a 25-per cent-cut on average, but that reduction will be even greater for rural Hydro One/Atikokan Hydro (R1 and R2) customers, who will see reductions as high as 40 per cent on their bills.

This means that the rural R1 and R2 customers would fare worse under the NDP plan, paying on average, at minimum, 10 per cent more for hydro.

4. Other than the 8-per-cent reduction our government brought in Jan. 1, the NDP plan won't reduce electricity prices by one cent in the immediate term.

In contrast, our plan offers additional relief on hydro bills by this summer, not somewhere down the road. And our plan will also keep rates consistent, holding them to inflation over the next four years. My constituents have told me they need immediate relief. That's what we have delivered.

As you can see, there are numerous holes in the NDP's proposals to reduce energy costs.

But I must add that our Fair Hydro Plan is not a starting point; it adds to a number of other actions we have taken to reduce electricity costs, including:

- The Northern Ontario Energy Credit helps families and individuals by providing tax credits for low- to middle-income families and individuals living in Northern Ontario. The maximum annual credit for a single person is \$146, and for a family is \$224.
- The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals and families up to \$1,008 per year, with a maximum of \$1,148 per year for qualifying seniors.
- The Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Program (RRRP) provides eligible rural ratepayers with additional relief.

For larger companies in North Western Ontario, we also:

- Expanded the Industrial Conservation initiative (ICI) program in January to capture over a thousand new businesses. Under the Fair Hydro Plan we have expanded it to even more medium-sized manufacturing. Participants are able to save up to one-third on their electricity bill.
- The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program, made permanent in 2015, helps large industrial facilities, including forestry and mining sectors, reduce electricity costs by 25 per cent. To date, the NIER program has disbursed approximately \$730 million.

Other measures we have already taken to reduce electricity costs include:

- A new agreement to trade electricity, energy capacity, and energy storage with Quebec, that will reduce electricity system costs by \$70 million.
- Removing the Debt Retirement Charge (DRC) early for all residential customers, saving the ratepayers \$70 per year.
- The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program provides emergency financial support of up to \$600 for families and individuals having trouble paying their bills.
- The saveONenergy Home Assistance Program helps income-eligible consumers manage energy costs by providing home energy efficiency assessments and energy saving measures at no cost.

Facts are facts. Our Fair Hydro Plan offers immediate relief for families, businesses and farms in Northwestern Ontario. The NDP plan offers nothing but hollow, half-baked proposals.

Bill Mauro

MPP, Thunder Bay - Atikokan

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SUDBURY STAR: *ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE*

A10; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Sudbury Star

PAGE: A10

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Sudbury Star

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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So now the Ontario Liberals, and by extension the government, are declaring themselves the champions of facts. You can anticipate how this is turning out. They do indeed catch some incorrect claims, but they don't stop there. No, everything must fit the message. So we get dubious political spin dressed up as factchecking.

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Actual fact: Many of those projects were already in the works, but are now being funded from this new revenue stream. Ontario is not offsetting carbon pricing revenue with tax breaks, as British Columbia is. Ontario is grabbing the cash and spending it on stuff. Whatever you think of these projects, it is not factually wrong to call the funding mechanism a cash grab.

At a time when the U.S. president is shamelessly using his office to spread conspiracy theories and insult those trying to respond with reason, we really don't need the Ontario government further degrading the meaning of a fact and adding to the atmosphere of cynicism.

And the Liberals have already demonstrated how they really feel about having to scrupulously stick to facts. We used to have a law - passed by Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty in 2004 - that forced taxpayerfunded government advertising to be used only for public service information campaigns. The auditor general could halt government ads whose primary purpose was obviously self-promotion of the governing party.

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DAILY OBSERVER (PEMBROKE): ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A5; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Daily Observer (Pembroke)

PAGE: A5

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Daily Observer (Pembroke)

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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NIAGARA FALLS REVIEW: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Niagara Falls Review

PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Niagara Falls Review

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 598

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BRANTFORD EXPOSITOR: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A6; 2017.03.24

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PAGE: A6

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Brantford Expositor

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 594

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THE BELLEVILLE INTELLIGENCER: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

B2; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Belleville Intelligencer
PAGE: B2
DATE: 2017.03.24
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EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Brian Platt
SOURCE: The Belleville Intelligencer
KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social
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WINDSOR STAR: ONTARIO OPPOSITION SLAMS HYDRO ADS AS PARTISAN PANDERING TO TAXPAYERS

SR5; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Windsor Star

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SECTION: Star Review

EDITION: Early

BYLINE: Allison Jones

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

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DATELINE: TORONTO

WORD COUNT: 388

Ontario Opposition slams hydro ads as partisan pandering to taxpayers

Taxpayer-funded ads about planned hydro bill reductions put the Liberal government in contempt of parliament, the Opposition charged Monday.

Both the Progressive Conservatives and NDP say the radio and social media ads are only meant to boost the popularity of a party sagging in the polls.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said the government has spent less than \$1 million - how much less, he wouldn't say - on the ads, but adding print and TV to the campaign later is likely.

"It's important for us to make sure that we let everyone know about the 25-per-cent reduction that's coming," he said.

The ads say people will receive an average of 25 per cent off their hydro bills this summer and rate increases are being held to inflation for four years. It doesn't mention the 25 per cent includes an eight-per-cent reduction that already took effect Jan. 1.

Thibeault said not a lot of people know about the Ontario Electricity Support Program for low-income ratepayers, so it's important to inform them of hydro relief programs.

PC Leader Patrick Brown said the OESP requires people to sign up to qualify. The planned additional 17-per-cent reduction is going on bills automatically.

"This is all about Liberals trying to help themselves," he said. "They're going to waste hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe millions, of taxpayer dollars not towards reducing hydro bills, but to promote themselves."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said public money is being used for partisan purposes.

"The Liberals have been in bad shape politically for some time now," she said. "This phantom plan that they threw out the door was a way to save their own political skin - it had nothing to do with the people of Ontario."

The PCs believe the ads are a case of contempt of parliament because no legislation has been passed or even tabled, and promoting the policy as definite presumes the will of the house.

But government house leader Yasir Naqvi said the ads don't interfere with the proceedings of the house because there is nothing to interfere with, since no legislation has yet been introduced. The Speaker will rule at a later time.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has said the ads likely wouldn't have been approved under old rules that gave her more discretion to deny ads she felt were partisan.

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WINDSOR STAR: CUSTOMERS STILL WITHOUT HYDRO DESPITE OEB RULING

A9; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Windsor Star

PAGE: A9

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: City & Region

EDITION: Early

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

KEYWORDS: ontario,energy,board,month,winter,electricity

DATELINE: TORONTO

WORD COUNT: 171

Customers still without hydro despite OEB ruling

The Ontario Energy Board says that one month after a ban on winter electricity disconnections took effect, about half of the affected customers remain disconnected.

The provincial government last month banned electricity distribution companies from disconnecting people's electricity for nonpayment during the winter.

Service had to also be restored "as soon as possible" to anyone who has had their electricity disconnected because they didn't pay their bill or who had their power restricted through a load limiter.

The OEB says when the ban went into effect, on Feb. 23, 845 residential customers were disconnected and 831 had load limiters.

Their most recent information shows that 407 customers have had their power reconnected and distributors have heard back from 62 customers, who the OEB says may be seasonal customers, who don't want their service reconnected.

Fewer than 150 customers still have load limiters.

Progressive Conservative Todd Smith said winter disconnections were supposed to end a month ago.

"Yet we still see people with no power in cold temperatures," he said. "It's shameful."

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NORTH BAY NUGGET: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: North Bay Nugget

PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: North Bay Nugget

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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WATERLOO REGION RECORD: HALF OF DISCONNECTED HYDRO USERS HAVE BEEN RECONNECTED

A3; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Waterloo Region Record

PAGE: A3

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: NEWS

EDITION: First

BYLINE: The Canadian Press

KEYWORDS: ontario,energy,board,month,winter,electricity

WORD COUNT: 223

Half of disconnected hydro users have been reconnected

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Fewer than 150 customers still have load limiters.

Progressive Conservative Todd Smith said winter disconnections were supposed to end a month ago.

"Yet we still see people with no power in cold temperatures," he said. "It's shameful and it's sadly just another broken promise from this government."

New Democrat France Gelinas said all three parties came together to quickly pass the legislation to ban disconnections and she expected the reconnections to happen a lot faster.

"The month of March in northern Ontario has been brutally, brutally cold," she said.

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STRATFORD BEACON-HERALD: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A5; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Stratford Beacon-Herald

PAGE: A5

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: Stratford Beacon-Herald

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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ST. CATHARINES STANDARD: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: St. Catharines Standard

PAGE: A4

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: St. Catharines Standard

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

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NORTHERN DAILY NEWS (KIRKLAND LAKE): ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A4; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Northern Daily News (Kirkland Lake)
PAGE: A4
DATE: 2017.03.24
SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Brian Platt
SOURCE: Northern Daily News (Kirkland Lake)
KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social
WORD COUNT: 594
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CORNWALL STANDARD FREEHOLDER: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A6; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: Cornwall Standard Freeholder
PAGE: A6
DATE: 2017.03.24
SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Brian Platt
SOURCE: Cornwall Standard Freeholder
KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social
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THE BROCKVILLE RECORDER & TIMES: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

A6; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Brockville Recorder & Times
PAGE: A6
DATE: 2017.03.24
SECTION: Opinion
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Brian Platt
SOURCE: The Brockville Recorder & Times
KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social
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THE BROCKVILLE RECORDER & TIMES: STORE'S HYDRO WOES USED TO HAMMER WYNNE

A1 / Front; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Brockville Recorder & Times

PAGE: A1 / Front

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: News

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Wayne Lowrie

SOURCE: The Brockville Recorder & Times

KEYWORDS: steve,clark,closing,variety,store,athens

ILLUSTRATION: Wayne Lowrie, The Recorder And Times / Swan's Variety Store in Athens on the day before it closed.;

WORD COUNT: 498

Store's hydro woes used to hammer Wynne

Leeds-Grenville MPP Steve Clark has used the closing of Swan's Variety Store in Athens to hammer the provincial government over high hydro rates.

Clark told the legislature on Tuesday that Swan's operated for 47 years, surviving a major fire and running the business through the terms of eight premiers, but not the ninth.

"On Friday, heartbroken owner Karen Swan turned out the lights for the last time," Clark said during Question Period. "It wasn't the lack of customers that spelled the end for Swan's; it was the crippling cost of hydro, culminating in last month's outrageous \$7,000 bill."

Clark asked the premier why she waited so long to act on the hydro crisis that contributed to the closing of the family-run business in Athens.

"The premier diminishes the hydro crisis and energy poverty she created by calling it a 'mistake.' What does the premier have to say to Karen Swan, who just paid for this 'mistake' with her family business?" asked Clark.

Karen Swan closed her family store on Friday, citing hydro costs of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month, the refusal of the province to crack down on illegal cigarettes and government red tape in general. The distraught Swan, 56, said she had worked in the family business since the age of nine and had poured her life into the variety store.

Premier Kathleen Wynne said she wasn't aware of the Swan case, but added that small business across Ontario will benefit from a 25-per-cent reduction in hydro bills this summer.

She said Ontario residents have been asked to pay for upgrades to the power system that was neglected over the years, and that's why the government is spreading the cost of the improvements over many years with the 25 per cent reduction.

"Again, I don't know the specific circumstances around this business, but we understand very clearly that small businesses, Mom-and-Pop businesses, in towns around the province need support," she told the legislature.

Clark said the premier has for years ignored warnings from him and other PC MPPs that unaffordable hydro rates were destroying our communities.

"Now, when her political future is at stake, she suddenly claims to care," said Clark. "They shamelessly spend taxpayer dollars on ads designed to portray themselves as heroes in a disaster they created."

Clark said no one trusts the Wynne government to fix the problem that it created.

"Ontarians will never forget this premier did nothing as hydro rates soared, businesses closed and families were forced from their homes," he said.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said the previous Conservative government left the electricity grid in a "disaster" with rolling brownouts on a regular basis.

"So we acted. This government - this party - acted, and made sure that we rebuilt the system, rebuilt generation, rebuilt transmission and rebuilt distribution. That was needed to ensure that all businesses in this province and all families in this province were able to keep the lights on," Thibeault said. WLowrie@Postmedia.com

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THE BARRIE EXAMINER: ONTARIO LIBERALS MAKE ERA OF FAKE NEWS WORSE

C2; 2017.03.24

PUBLICATION: The Barrie Examiner

PAGE: C2

DATE: 2017.03.24

SECTION: Opinion

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Brian Platt

SOURCE: The Barrie Examiner

KEYWORDS: government,picks,slogan,never,releases,social

WORD COUNT: 596

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Actual fact: Many of those projects were already in the works, but are now being funded from this new revenue stream. Ontario is not offsetting carbon pricing revenue with tax breaks, as British Columbia is. Ontario is grabbing the cash and spending it on stuff. Whatever you think of these projects, it is not factually wrong to call the funding mechanism a cash grab.

At a time when the U.S. president is shamelessly using his office to spread conspiracy theories and insult those trying to respond with reason, we really don't need the Ontario government further degrading the meaning of a fact and adding to the atmosphere of cynicism.

And the Liberals have already demonstrated how they really feel about having to scrupulously stick to facts. We used to have a law - passed by Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty in 2004 - that forced taxpayerfunded government advertising to be used only for public service information campaigns. The auditor general could halt government ads whose primary purpose was obviously self-promotion of the governing party.

Wynne's Liberals gutted that law in the spring of 2015. They didn't want ads filled with dry facts; they wanted ads that sold their message to voters. And now we have a blitz of taxpayerfunded advertising promoting Wynne's new plan to reduce hydro rates.

For the Liberals, as with all political parties, a fact is worth mentioning only when it makes them look good. bplatt@postmedia.com

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