

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

June 30, 2017

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PRINT COVERAGE

Toronto Sun: Powerless Premier; Expert Say Provide Wasted \$ 1B On Clean Energy; A3; 2017.06.30

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Powerless Premier; Expert Say Provide Wasted \$ 1B On Clean Energy

Ontario wasted \$1 billion worth of clean electricity in 2016, according to the province's professional engineers.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, a nonpartisan body, which represents the province's engineers, says it has crunched government hydro numbers from 2016 and they show that 7.6 terawatt-hours of clean hydro went down the drain that year. That's equal to the amount required to power 760,000 homes - or \$1 billion worth of electricity - said the group's past president Paul Acchione.

"This represents a 58% increase in the amount of clean electricity that Ontario wasted in 2015 which was 4.8 terawatt hours," he said. "All while the province continues to export more than twomillion homes'worth of electricity to neighbouring jurisdictions for a price less than it costs to produce."

Acchione said the province is wasting the power through a practice called "curtailment." It means that when the province's hydro generators produce power consumers don't need, and it can't be exported, they have to dump it.

"It's when we tell our dams to let the water spill over the top, our nuclear generators to release steam to their condensers and our wind turbines not to turn even when it's windy," he said. "The numbers...show that Ontario's cleanest source of power is literally going down the drain because we're producing too much of it."

Jonathan Hack, the president and chairman of the OSPE board, said the group provided the analysis to all three parties at Queen's Park. They'd like to see engineers more intimately involved in policy creation, because at the moment, technical decisions about the province's hydro system have been politicized, he said.

"We need to involve engineers in policy making decisions," Hack said. "Engineers right now are being asked to be involved only when the implementation occurs on these policies and that is too late."

Progressive Conservative energy critic Todd Smith, who hosted the group at Queen's Park Thursday, said the government has been ignoring experts on the file for years.

That led to the creation of the Green Energy Act, he added.

"The first thing that they need to do is stop having politicians design our energy and our electrical system and allow experts to provide their input," he said.

Smith said the Tories will introduce a plan to address the systematic problems in the hydro system later this year or "in early 2018."

Colin Nekolaichuk, spokesman for energy minister Glenn Thibeault, slammed the Tories for voting against the government's 25% hydro rate reduction plan and not having a plan of their own.

He did not address the analysis of the OSPE in a statement to the Toronto Sun. "As OSPE acknowledged in the media studio this morning, our government works closely with their organization and other stakeholders, and takes their input seriously," Nekolaichuk said.
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Welland Tribune: Why Wynne could yet win; A formidable campaigner, Ontario's premier is outflanking the NDP on the left and defining Patrick Brown as an opportunist; A7; 2017.06.30

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ILLUSTRATION: Luke Hendry, Postmedia Network / (See hardcopy for photo);

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St. Catharines Standard: Why Wynne could yet win; A formidable campaigner, Ontario's premier is outflanking the NDP on the left and defining Patrick Brown as an opportunist; A7; 2017.06.30

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Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin: Timing of rate request suspect; A4; 2017.06.30

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BYLINE: Jim Merriam

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Timing of rate request suspect

If Hydro One weren't Hydro One, it would be beyond belief that the utility would have the audacity to seek a hike in distribution rates in 2017.

In the recent past, the utility and the provincial government have endured withering attacks over the costs of electricity in Ontario.

The protests have covered power poverty in the province, indefensible prices for delivery even when no power is used, huge salaries for the top dogs at Hydro One, the unconscionable sell-off of portions of the utility by Premier Kathleen Wynne's government to private interests.

In the face of all that, Hydro One is seeking a hike in distribution rates.

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) is holding hearings on the rate request and it's here that things get weird.

In a June 6 new release from Hydro One, in response to notices to customers sent by the OEB, the utility says it's "committed to reducing costs and increasing the company's productivity and efficiency. The rate application reflects this commitment and is based on a plan that includes making only the necessary improvements to ensure the reliable supply of electricity."

Translation: We want you to pay more so we can deliver cheaper power sometime in the future. We're from Hydro One and we're here to help. Trust us.

In reality, the utility is working on improving profits by increasing costs to its customers. Once again, we're off down the rabbit hole.

However, an Ontario Energy Board (OEB) spokesperson is quoted as saying: "Any amounts approved by the OEB will not impact the distribution line of the bill of most Hydro One customers, after the Fair Hydro Act credits and changes are applied."

Translation: The government has a plan to borrow from your grandchildren to make sure you pay less for electricity today. So, we are free to approve a higher rate, because you won't notice it. Overall, you'll still pay less. Trust us.

Where is the entrance to that rabbit hole again? The comments from the OEB came in answer to questions about whether the public consultations really meant anything or if they were just window dressing, with decisions already made.

The spokesperson said customer input, intervenors and OEB staff members each have great weight when considering if a requested rate increase is reasonable.

Part of the exercise is to assure customers "there's a regulator that's watching out for them as well."

In the real world, any regulator worth the name would just say no to a rate hike request in 2017. I'm just saying.

We all know that the government's so-called Fair Hydro Act should be renamed the Hydro Credit Card Act, because the piper will have to be paid. And the bill will come due some years down the road.

Both Hydro One and the OEB seem to hope we ignore the non-partisan provincial financial accountability officer. That report says the net result of the Fair Hydro Act will mean future ratepayers will have to come up with an additional \$21 billion to play catch up.

So here we have two entities supported by the public purse claiming consumers won't feel jacked up prices, because the government is already pretending to bring prices down.

Can anyone say, collusion?

jimmerriam@hotmail.com