

Evening Media Scan - Hydro Rate Reduction - August 29, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

August 29, 2017

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TV Transcripts

Global Ontario Announces Pick-And-Pay Hydro Options For Consumers

Source: Global

Aug 29, 2017 5:44 PM (6)

Anchor: Ontario is unveiling a series of pilot projects that is going to test new potential pricing structures for electricity consumption. Now currently, the amount you pay per kilowatt/hour depends on the time of day that you're consuming that power. This project will look at alternatives, including a pick-and-pay program. Test markets will be in parts of Oshawa, York Region, Barrie and London, and if the \$17.5 million pilot is successful, those new billing options will eventually be rolled out across Ontario.

CFTO Ontario Announces Pick-And-Pay Hydro Options For Consumers

Source: CFTO

Aug 29, 2017 6:15 PM (13)

Anchor 1: Well we were first to tell you about it last night. Today the Energy Minister made it official.

Anchor 2: New pricing plans for your hydro bill are on the way, and these will be tailored to the times that you need cheap electricity most. CTV's Paul Bliss has more today on this exclusive story. Paul, people

seem to be happy about it.

Reporter: So far, Ken, those who have been testing it out for the last couple of years say they've already saved hundreds of dollars. This is going to be the future, allowing you to select a hydro pricing plan that fits your lifestyle and it's actually going to make the smart metres a little bit smarter.

Reporter: Barb and Alex Armstrong have spent two years trying the pick-and-pay hydro plan. They love it.

Barb Armstrong, Hydro Customer: The results my husband and I have seen have been fantastic. We have saved almost \$400 all within the pricing structure that fits our family's lifestyle and patterns.

Reporter: The plan is tailored to their lifestyle. They enjoy cheaper hydro prices when they need it the most, during the day.

Alex Armstrong, Hydro Customer: Getting a load of laundry through the washer and dryer before seven in the morning for somebody like me who's retired isn't going to happen, so this is great.

Reporter: CTV News was first to unveil the push to give homeowners a choice of multiple price packages for electricity just like with cable and telephone.

Brian Bentz, President and CEO of Alectra Inc.: There's lots of choices that people have in their lives, in entertainment, and we think that it's time that people had similar type of choices in their electricity bill.

Reporter: The pilot project is expanding to nearly 20,000 customers, but once all the kinks are ironed out and the patterns established in about 18 months or so, you can expect a much wider rollout. Here's a look at a plan geared to shift workers. Between midnight and 6am, electricity is in "Super-Off Peak" mode, an incredibly cheap 2 cents a kilowatt hour. Compare that to "Normal Off-Peak" prices of 6.5 cents. The overnighter "On-Peak" is between 11am and 5pm. That's when you'd pay a whopping 18.4 cents a kilowatt hour compared to standard time of use price peak of 13.2 cents. Clearly you avoid the peak times. The Energy Minister says consumers are going to like having these choices.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: Not only will this project test multiple price plans and assess their impact on consumer behaviours, energy use, and costs, it will help guide future OEB decisions on potential new price plans that better match a customer's lifestyle and give them more control over their electricity costs.

Reporter: The results so far have been positive. Most homeowners on the trial, like the Armstrongs, have been saving money. The local electric companies that are running the pilot project are going to keep an eye on the people participating, track the number of people who drop out and the number of people who complain so that they can refine it when this thing is rolled out in earnest and find any weaknesses from a consumer perspective so when it's ready to roll in 18 months or so it's finely tuned. Live at Queen's Park, I'm Paul Bliss.

C J O H Province Rolls Out New Hydro Pricing Plan Pilot Project

Source: CJOH
Aug 29, 2017 6:04 PM (5)

Anchor 1: A new hydro pricing plan rolling out in several Ontario cities will have consumers picking tailor-made electricity packages based on time-of-use and price.

Anchor 2: The pilot project means they can pick a time of day when the hydro use is highest, and prices would be lower. The pilot in London, Oshawa, York Region, and Barrie will offer a number of plans that allow residents to shift their use and hydro packages based on when they use the most electricity. CTV's Annie Bergeron-Oliver has more on this. Annie.

Reporter: Well, Patricia, the government is looking at this as a way for consumers to save money by tailoring their hydro plans so electricity is the cheapest when it suits their lifestyle. Pick the wrong package, and it could raise your bill. At the Kenny household, there's always laundry waiting to be done.

Shawn Kenny, Homeowner: Typically at night. Sometimes schedules don't allow that.

With work and two young boys always on the go, conserving energy can be tough. Fortunately, a new pick

and pay billing model for hydro is in the works.

Kenny: The options are useful, for sure. Probably the weekends is. Maybe that or the off-peak time or something is all. Generally home.

Reporter: Starting September 1st, about 18,000 people in London, Barrie, Oshawa, and York Region will be offered a chance to tailor their hydro bill to their lifestyle. Options include a low overnight rate between midnight and 6 AM for shift workers. An enhanced time of use plan where off-peak prices are dropped. And on-peak increased. And there is a variable plan where peak prices are fluid between 3 and 9 PM

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Minister of Energy: This is offering fairness and choice, and I think that's what people really want to see.

Reporter: For years, Ontario consumers have been voicing concern about rising hydro prices, and a feeling that smart meters are not saving them money. This new pricing model based on your lifestyle is something the Ontario government hopes will provide some relief. Barb Armstrong's family signed up for similar pilot in 2015 and says it's been a big savings.

Barb Armstrong, Pilot Project Participant: We have hours that we can attest to actually saving money. We can plan our day a lot better now.

Reporter: Here in Ottawa, hydro consumers like Jessica Bressan, hopeful changes are coming to bring down their bills.

Jessica Bressan, Homeowner: I think that would be nice. Because at least you'd have some flexibility. Right now, it's sort of this is the way you have to do it. If it benefits – if you're home during the day, and you can do laundry during the day, that would be a nice thing to do.

Reporter: The pilot cost \$17.5 million but the government is calling this a revenue neutral program. Now keep in mind if the delivery charge stays where it is, it will not drastically reduce your monthly bill.

Anchor 1: CTV's Annie Bergeron-Oliver reporting live, thank you, Annie.

CKCO Province To Roll Out Pick And Pay Hydro Package Plan

Source: CKCO
Aug 29, 2017 6:25 PM (16)

Anchor: You can pick your cable package but what about picking your energy package? The province is introducing hydro billing based on your lifestyle. CTV's Paul Bliss has the details.

Reporter: Barb and Alex Armstrong have spent two years trying to pick and pay hydro plan. They love it.

Barb Armstrong, Pick and Pay Hydro Plan User: The results my husband and I have seen have been fantastic. We have saved almost \$400 all within the pricing structure that fits our family's lifestyle and patterns.

Reporter: The plan they selected is tailored to their lifestyles. They enjoy cheaper hydro prices when they need it most, during the day.

Alex Armstrong, Pick and Pay Hydro Plan User: Getting a load of laundry through the washer and dryer before 7:00 in the morning for somebody like me who is retired isn't going to happen, so this is great.

Reporter: CTV News was first to unveil the push to give homeowners a choice of multiple price packages for electricity, just like cable and telephone.

Brian Bentz, President & CEO, Alectra: There's lots of choices that people have in their lives and entertainment. And we think that it's time that people had similar type of choices in their electricity bill.

Reporter: The pilot project is expanding to nearly 20,000 customers, but once all the kinks are ironed out and the patterns established in about 18 months or so, we can expect a much wider rollout. Here's a look at a plan geared to shift workers. Between midnight and 6:00 a.m., electricity is in super off-peak mode. An incredibly cheap two cents a kilowatt hour, compare that to normal off-peak hour prices at six and a

half cents. The overnight on-peak is between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. That's when you pay a whopping 18.4 cents a kilowatt hour compared to standard time of use price peak of 13.2 cents. Clearly you avoid the peak times. The Energy Minister says consumers are going to like having these choices.

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy: Not only will this project test multiple price plans, and assess their impact on consumer behaviours, energy use and costs, it will help guide future OEB decisions on potential new price plans that better match a customer's lifestyle and give them more control over their electricity costs.

Reporter: The result so far have been positive. Most home owners on the trial like the Armstrongs have been saving money. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

MCTV New Hydro Rate Plan Unveiled By Province Today

Source: MCTV
Aug 29, 2017 6:19 PM (12)

Anchor: Thanks very much. Well that new hydro rate plan we told you about yesterday from Queen's Park was officially unveiled today and it's being likened to pick and play with your cable T.V. So far, Paul Bliss reports the people seem to like it.

Reporter: Barb and Alex Armstrong have spent two years trying to pick and pay hydro plan. They love it.

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Reporter: The result so far have been positive. Most home owners on the trial like the Armstrongs have been saving money. Paul Bliss, CTV News, Queen's Park.

CKVR Pick And Pay Hydro To Come To More Local Homes

Source: CKVR
Aug 29, 2017 6:06 PM (5)

Anchor: Pick-and-pay hydro is coming to more local homes. This Friday Alectra utilities will expand a pilot

program that lets customers choose when they want to save more on power. CTV's Mike Aرسالides tells us the government calls it the way of the future.

Reporter: As the cost to light, heat, a home has become unaffordable for many in Simcoe County.

Peter Sundborg, Barrie Food Bank: We're having people not go and buy groceries, and trying to pay the hydro bill.

Reporter: Alectra is expanding its lifestyle hydro billing.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: To give consumers greater flexibility and choice in their electricity pricing plans.

Reporter: The program offers three choices. An enhanced plan with the most savings between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., a dynamic plan with various rates a day and an overnight plan, giving the deepest discounts between midnight and 6 a.m. Perfect for small business owners Barb and Alex Armstrong who have already enrolled in the pilot project.

Barb Armstrong, Pilot Project User: As opposed to before it was seven until seven, and our business doesn't actually work that way, families don't always work that way so now it's a lot easier.

Alex Armstrong, Pilot Project User: It makes running the dishwasher, the dryer, the washing machine and when possible the air conditioning – and the rest just looks after itself.

Reporter: They say it saved them about \$400 and Alectra figures it will be a good fit for most customers in an on-demand world.

Brian Betz, Alectra President & CEO: It's really important to have the trust of the consumer and we want to provide them with that, With new choices, new pricing choices, innovative solutions and be that ally for them.

Reporter: Alectra likes what they're hearing so far from their 1,750 pilot project customers and they hope to add another 14,000 by the end of next year. Mike Aرسالides, CTV News, Barrie.

CKPR Province Introducing Pick-and-Pay Hydro Pilot Project

Source: CKPR
Aug 29, 2017 6:10 PM (8)

Anchor: The province is implementing a new pick and pay hydro pilot project that allows customers to tailor on and off peak billing times to their lifestyles, much like pick-and-pay cable packages. Paul Bliss explains.

Reporter: We can pick our television cable packages to fit our viewing habits and that's exactly the principle behind the new hydro customer plans to be unveiled Tuesday. Pilot projects starting this year will lay ground work for an eventual province-wide roll-out. Here's a sample of some of the plans. "The Overnight." It adds a super off-peak rate between midnight and 6:00am. This is designed for customers who work shifts, charge electric vehicles, and use electricity mostly overnight when the cost to the system is low. "The Enhanced." A much bigger difference between on-peak and off-peak prices. The spread would be a whopping 4 to 1 differential instead of 2 to 1 difference now for on-peak to off-peak. "The Dynamic." Variable peak prices between 3:00pm and 9:00pm, with all other times being off-peak. That off-peak would be 25 per cent lower than time-of-use off-peak we get now.

Reporter: People complain smart meters don't work because they feel they're not saving money, but these new price packages are tailored to your lifestyle, adjusting the peak and off-peak prices for when you do things like laundry, entertain, and cooking. The technology in smart meters, smartphones, and smart thermostats will also allow you to interact with your local distribution company. They can warn you before your prices are set to rise, allowing to you cut back remotely.

Reporter: Another plan being tested involves seasonal time-of-use. Consumers would get a single flat rate in spring and fall and off and on-peak prices in winter and summer. These are just a few of the pick and pay type hydro packages being tested by thousands in the coming months. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

Global Province Set To Announce Pick-And-Pay Hydro Options

Source: Global
Aug 29, 2017 12:09 PM (5)

Anchor: Well the province is unveiling a series of pilot projects that will test pricing structures for electricity bills. It's about looking at alternatives to the current time-of-use pricing, including a pick-and-pay model. The \$17.5 million project will begin within the next few months for some customers in Oshawa, York Region, Barrie, and London. If the pilot is successful, the new billing options will eventually be rolled out across Ontario.

CFTO Talkback Toronto: Do You Expect To Save Through The New Hydro Billing Plan?

Source: CFTO
Aug 29, 2017 12:39 PM (Q)

Anchor: Today on Talkback Toronto, do you expect to save money through the new hydro billing plan that Paul Bliss told us about just a short time ago? Paul joining us for Talkback Toronto today. Paul, I wonder, first of all, do we have generating capacity in Ontario? Do we have enough?

Reporter: We have way too much electricity, Ken. The great recession in 2008/9 knocked out a lot of our manufacturing and people have been conserving electricity as well. So everybody is installing LED lights, and TV's are more efficient, appliances are more efficient so the amount of electricity we need right now is nowhere near what we thought we were going to need.

Anchor: So why aren't we charged just the price to cover what the generating costs are?

Anchor: The whole idea of different pricing at different times of the day is to prevent surges. When it gets really, really hot or really, really cold, the demand for electricity soars, and that's when electricity, one, becomes very expensive to produce because you have to pay big prices to the gas plants and the other providers that have private contracts. It's a deterrent. The higher prices are generally timed to keep people from using electricity so that it doesn't strain the system.

Anchor: Okay so will this get around it?

Reporter: I think it will, actually, and one of the questions I asked my source yesterday when I got this story was if everybody starts doing this and it reduces the amount of money that goes into the system, how are we going to pay for the system? I was told, that eventually we don't have to renew the contracts at the gas plants, and we can start knocking off the number of people and companies we pay to supply us electricity. We won't need to pay them anymore, essentially. It reduces the demand.

Anchor: Meanwhile, we've done a lot of stories of people dinged with serious delivery charges. Will that come into this?

Reporter: No, it's not going to change. That's the money they need to build the grid, and put in all of the transformers and wires, and that's not going to change.

Anchor: All right. Let's go to the phones. Hi Sue, how are you?

Sue: Hi, Ken. Hi, Paul.

Anchor: Sound like a good idea, Sue?

Sue: I think in the short term, it might be but I think that the Ontario government is attempting to convince us that hydro rates can be lower by giving us a choice. However, the question is why are they doing it now, and why didn't they do it before? It's a reaction to a situation that we, as consumers, have been complaining about for a long, long time, and instead of a proactive situation, and to me, it's a only Band-Aid situation for the retirement of the debt which over the next 30 years, I will never see it paid and our costs are going to have to increase to be able to pay that debt or to even be able to attempt to pay that debt. And that worries me.

Anchor: Paul?

Reporter: You're right, the debt is going to be huge, but it is sort of a separate issue, and you are going to pay the debt through your hydro bill. You're going to pay that through taxes. I don't know if that makes you feel better.

Sue: No.

Reporter: Probably not.

Anchor: If it makes Sue or Ken feel any better.

Reporter: At least when it comes to taxes though, you can feel a little bit of satisfaction in the fact that businesses pay it as well. It's retail tax, it's not all dumped on homeowners.

Sue: Oh, Okay.

Anchor: No, but municipalities pay that as well. And it's a huge part of the bill for some.

Reporter: Yeah. It is.

Sue: And it is a reason why a lot of businesses aren't locating into our area.

Reporter: Yeah. There is a miscalculation, I think, by the government in how quickly green energy would become cheap. We are still paying a lot of money for the solar, the wind and the gas plants and the plan they had rolled out.

Sue: We put solar panels on our roof about two and a half years ago, and we have two meters. One for what we use and Ontario hydro pays us. It has made a difference, but it cost us a lot of money up front to do that.

Reporter: Very expensive.

Anchor: Yeah, you have like a 20-year payback period on that too.

Sue: It should pay for itself within 8 years. But the contract is 20 years for the rate that we've got.

Anchor: Thank you, Sue.

Sue: Thank you very much.

Anchor: All right, let's move on to Larry. How are you, Larry?

Larry: Hi.

Anchor: You like the idea?

Larry: No, I don't. It's just another way hydro are trying to justify how great they are and I feel that the hydro rates, if they want me to pick a time, that's okay this week because I'm on a certain shift. The majority of the people work shift work, and if I pick the time that is not conducive to me being at home at a certain time, it doesn't make any sense. I think basically they should take the rates and just put them together and give us a decent rate. One decent rate regardless of what time.

Anchor: So the thing is you don't to gamble.

Larry: Well, yeah. They're asking me to gamble on whether I'm going to be using it at a particular time. Well, in this day and age, it doesn't really make any sense because we're not all just sitting at home, waiting to turn on our TV or do our laundry. We're here and there and everywhere, and our lifestyles are not – We're not geared to do that and I think it's just another idea from hydro to try to justify themselves. Which I don't think, very many people in this province trust them to begin with.

Anchor: Paul, Larry brings up a good point. I don't know whether you know this yet or not, how often will be you able to change the package that you want? Because Larry is right, a lot of people work shift work, and the shifts may change. You may be working nights this month. You may be working days next month.

Reporter: It's a great point and a great question. There's no answer. I don't have that yet. Part of the pilot project is they're going to see how often people opt out of it to get a sense of what options they should include for the big rollout. So if people call and say, you know what, I quit because my lifestyle has changed, they'll take that into consideration when they roll it out. Ken, I want to share with you, one example of the rates that you could be charged under this. Because I think people will find it interesting. Pardon the glasses here, that's just age speaking. The one overnight plan that I had mentioned, There's a super off-peak period between midnight and 6 AM where you're only charged 2 cents a kilowatt hour. 2 cents kilowatt hour versus right now, the off-peak is 6.5 a kilowatt hour. Now, that's between midnight and 6 AM. Between 11 AM and 5 PM, presumably when you are at work, the on-peak is 18.5 cents a kilowatt. So your cheapest is 2 cents which is super cheap. Below market prices. Your most expensive is 18.5, which is above the actual high rate right now. So it does gives you flexibility. If you're an overnight person, and you can use your electricity at nighttime, that will save you a lot of money.

Anchor: All right, I'm going to get some batteries, Paul, and store everything up in the middle of the night, and use it from there. Paul Bliss joining us. Thank you, Paul. Appreciate your insight on this. Paul knows everything there is to know about the hydro file. You can vote on the web poll by the way. That's at Toronto.ctvnews.ca.

CFTO Province Introduces New Hydro Pricing Plan

Source: CFTO
Aug 29, 2017 12:14 PM (8)

Anchor: You know, you can pick your cell phone plan. You can pick your cable package. What about picking your energy package? The province introducing hydro billing based on your lifestyle. CTV's Paul Bliss broke the story last night at 6. Paul, the Premier and her Energy Minister officially announcing the plan this morning. How does it work?

Reporter: You know, Ken, I think consumers and homeowners will find it very interesting. Essentially, you pick a hydro price package that is tailored to your lifestyle. So if you're a senior, you're perhaps not awake at the same time as a lot of people who are working shift work overnight. Or for families, you're always using most of your electricity after school, and before school. Well this plan is going to allow you to have cheaper prices when you actually use the most electricity which is handy, right? Everybody thought the smart meters would bring the prices down, didn't really feel that way, so this is actually engaging the smart meters in a way that's quite useful and effective. Sounds too good to be true, actually. Homeowners have been battling rising prices for more than a decade. We all know that. The big criticism of the smart meters is there was not enough of a difference between the peak price and the off-peak. So why stay up late to do your laundry, and fire up the dishwasher at midnight when the off-peak prices weren't that low? These new pick-and-pay type hydro pricing packages are going to tailor the time of price to fit your lifestyle. Off-peak will be super low in terms of price but the peak will be higher so it's not a total free ride. The Energy Minister says it's all about giving customers freedom, and choice.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: Not only will this project test multiple price plans, and assess their impact on consumer behaviors, energy use, and costs, it will help guide future OEB decisions on potential new price plans that better match a customer's lifestyle, and give them more control over their electricity costs.

Barb Armstrong, Pilot Participant: The results my husband and I have seen has been fantastic. We have saved almost \$400. All within the pricing structure that fits our family's lifestyle and patterns.

Brian Bentz, President and CEO of Alectra: They've loved it. As I said, 1,750 customers who embraced the advantage power pricing pilot program, most of them have saved money. It was such a success that we are expanding into three new different price zones.

Reporter: So they are going to test this out now, starting with about 20,000 people. It's a much larger scale. London, Oshawa, York Region, and Barrie. The key, though, is to pick the package that allows you to have cheap prices when you use it. Because if you don't take advantage of that, you're going to get dinged, and like I said, it's not a total free ride. But I think it makes people feel better about their electricity usage, and feel like they have more control over it. Ken.

Anchor: Paul, it sounds like what you do is you take a look at your past bills, and you say, okay, well, this is the time of day where we're using the most electricity. Right. And then you go with the package that suits that. Is that it?

Reporter: Yeah, you sit back in your life, and go when do I use the dishwasher, when is the air-conditioner running, and the furnace – these are things as Canadians we always have to run but when we go to bed at night, for most of us, we turn these things down, and 1 o'clock in the morning, most of us aren't using it and for people coming home, and they've got kids after school, they're doing the dishwasher, or the laundry, and you got the washing machine, and the drier. So you say, okay, that's when I want the cheapest electricity, and that's the package you take.

Anchor: Okay. We're going to talk about this in just a moment on Talkback Toronto and you're going to join us.

Reporter: Happy to.

Anchor: Looking forward to it. Thank you, Paul.

CJOH Province To Roll Out New Hydro Pricing Plan This Year

Source: CJOH
Aug 29, 2017 12:11 PM (13)

Anchor: Well get ready for a new way to buy your electricity. CTV News has learned the province is starting to roll out hydro pricing plans that are tailored to your lifestyle. CTV's Paul Bliss has the exclusive details.

Reporter: We can pick our television cable packages to fit our viewing habits and that's exactly the principle behind the new hydro customer plans to be unveiled Tuesday. Pilot projects starting this year will lay ground work for an eventual province-wide rollout. Here's a sample of some of the plans: "The Overnight." It adds a super off-peak rate between midnight and 6:00AM. This is designed for customers who work shifts, charge electric vehicles, and use electricity mostly overnight when the cost to the system is low. "The Enhanced." A much bigger difference between on-peak and off-peak prices. The spread would be a whopping 4 to 1 differential instead of 2 to 1 difference now for on-peak to off-peak. "The Dynamic." Variable peak prices between 3:00PM and 9:00PM, with all other times being off-peak. That off-peak would be 25 per cent lower than time-of-use off-peak we get now.

Reporter: People complain smart metres don't work because they feel they're not saving money, but these new price packages are tailored to your lifestyle, adjusting the peak and off-peak prices for when you do things like laundry, entertain, and cooking. The technology in smart metres, smartphones, and smart thermostats will also allow you to interact with your local distribution company. They can warn you before your prices are set to rise, allowing you to cut back remotely.

Reporter: Another plan being tested involves seasonal time-of-use. Consumers would get a single flat rate in spring and fall and off and on-peak prices in winter and summer. These are just a few of the pick-and-pay type hydro packages being tested by thousands in the coming months. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

CKCO Province To Pilot Test New Hydro Pick And Choose Plan

Source: CKCO
Aug 29, 2017 12:19 PM (11)

Anchor: Now to a story you'll only see here. Get ready for a new way to buy your electricity. CTV News has learned the province is starting to roll out hydro pricing plans that are tailored to your lifestyle. CTV's Paul Bliss has the details.

Reporter: We can pick our television cable packages to fit our viewing habits and that's exactly the principle behind the new hydro customer plans to be unveiled Tuesday. Pilot projects starting this year will lay ground work for an eventual province-wide rollout. Here's a sample of some of the plans: "The Overnight." It adds a super off-peak rate between midnight and 6:00AM. This is designed for customers who work shifts, charge electric vehicles, and use electricity mostly overnight when the cost to the system is low. "The Enhanced." A much bigger difference between on-peak and off-peak prices. The spread would be a whopping 4 to 1 differential instead of 2 to 1 difference now for on-peak to off-peak. "The Dynamic." Variable peak prices between 3:00PM and 9:00PM, with all other times being off-peak. That off-peak would be 25 per cent lower than time-of-use off-peak we get now.

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Reporter: Another plan being tested involves seasonal time-of-use. Consumers would get a single flat rate in spring and fall and off and on-peak prices in winter and summer. These are just a few of the pick-and-pay type hydro packages being tested by thousands in the coming months. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

MCTV Minister Thibeault Announces ICI Program Expansion In

Source: MCTV
Aug 29, 2017 12:30 PM (22)

Anchor: Well Ontario's Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault was in North Bay yesterday talking about the province's expanded Industrial Conservation Initiative but North Bay Hydro is hoping it expands further. CTV's Joey Slattery has that story.

Reporter: Canadore College is one of the four businesses in North Bay participating in the Industrial Conservation Initiative that hopes to cut hydro costs by a million dollars.

George Burton, Canadore College President: Well we'd like to reach those savings over the next two years, and we'd like to have it annualized. So if you look at the multiples for us, if we can save \$250, half a million dollars a year in utility costs that money then goes right back into the institution. So for us, over the lifetime of the institution, that's significant.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister: The way it actually works is you've got to be able to say you are over one megawatt of power. But we actually changed the program to actually help manufacturing as well. So through the Fair Hydro Plan we actually lowered the criteria for certain manufacturing companies. They can qualify if it's 500 kilowatts.

Reporter: With the baseline of monthly peaks lower, North Bay Hydro CEO says the city went from having one participating employer to four with the potential for up to 50 in total. But he doesn't think it should stop there.

Todd Wilcox, North Bay Hydro CEO: (Inaudible) any small business, which is 50 kilowatts. So that would open up to three, four hundred businesses here in North Bay. And if you can have that kind of savings, it is quite significant.

Reporter: With no plans to lower the wattage usage rates announced, Wilcox says he will continue to lobby for smaller businesses. In the meantime, he hopes eligible business will take advantage of the program.

MCTV Province Set To Announce Pick-And-Pay Hydro Options

Source: MCTV
Aug 29, 2017 12:32 PM (23)

Anchor: A lot of customers across the north have seen hydro bills fluctuate but now the provincial government has a new electricity plan for all customers including residential. It's actually being released today but CTV's Paul Bliss got a sneak peek.

Reporter: We can pick our television cable packages to fit our viewing habits and that's exactly the principle behind the new hydro customer plans to be unveiled Tuesday. Pilot projects starting this year will lay ground work for an eventual province-wide roll-out. Here's a sample of some of the plans. "The Overnight." It adds a super off-peak rate between midnight and 6:00am. This is designed for customers who work shifts, charge electric vehicles, and use electricity mostly overnight when the cost to the system is low. "The Enhanced." A much bigger difference between on-peak and off-peak prices. The spread would be a whopping 4 to 1 differential instead of 2 to 1 difference now for on-peak to off-peak. "The Dynamic." Variable peak prices between 3:00pm and 9:00pm, with all other times being off-peak. That off-

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Reporter: Another plan being tested involves seasonal time-of-use. Consumers would get a single flat rate in spring and fall and off and on-peak prices in winter and summer. These are just a few of the pick-and-pay type hydro packages being tested by thousands in the coming months. Paul Bliss, CTV News.

Online Coverage

Hamilton Spec **DRESCHER: Partisan hydro ads are paying off**

With an election on the horizon, Wynne needs good news

By: Andrew Dreschel
Tuesday, August 29, 2017

<https://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/7527630-dreschel-partisan-hydro-ads-are-paying-off-for-liberals/>

It appears all those taxpayer-funded ads about hydro rate cuts are finally paying off for Premier Kathleen Wynne.

A new government-commissioned poll suggests that the still unpopular Liberals are somewhat less unloved than they were several months ago, and the turning point appears to have been cuts to consumer electricity bills.

The poll, obtained by the Canadian Press through a Freedom of Information request, found that back in January 61 per cent of respondents said the government was off the mark. By July, that number had dropped to 49 per cent.

That may not be exactly super-duper news for the Liberals but, with the 2018 election campaign a mere eight months away, any ray of sunshine helps.

The poll found solid public support for the \$15 minimum wage and the principle of the government's cap-and-trade system.

But the pivotal moment came in March when the government announced it was reducing hydro bills by another 17 per cent on top of the eight per cent announced in January.

Since then, public opinion of the government's handling of electricity pricing has steadily improved, with 44 per cent of respondents giving it thumbs up in July compared to 34 per cent in March.

The fact that an Ontario-wide advertising blitz promoting the cuts was unfolding at the same time is probably no coincidence. Hopefully the fishy fact that taxpayers rather than the Liberal party are paying for those ads won't be lost on voters.

Back in March when the self-serving ads first began popping up on radio stations, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said they probably would have been considered partisan and not approved by her office if the Liberals hadn't changed the rules on government advertising in 2015.

The old rules banned ads that encouraged a positive view of government or a negative view of its critics. The new watered down rules only ban ads if they use an elected member's picture, name or voice, or the colour or logo associated with a political party.

Lysyk compared the hydro ads to "a pat-on-the-back type of advertising."

It's easy to see her point. One of the ads says, "Ontario has made important investments in clean, reliable

energy. This has led to hydro bills that have become harder to pay. We've heard you and we're taking action with the fair hydro plan."

Who's the "we" in "we've heard you" if not the Liberals?

The subject came up during a recent Spectator editorial board meeting with Wynne. When asked about the "we've heard you" piece, Wynne weaved.

"Government is broader than the governing party," she said. "Government is also the civil service and the people who implement the policies of government."

If Wynne expects us to believe her government was following bureaucratic advice when they decided to cut hydro rates, her sunroof must be leaking.

What we're plainly dealing with here is public money being used to boost the Liberal party's popularity. Judging by their polling, it appears to be working.

To be fair, Wynne noted there weren't any rules in place governing partisan ads when the Liberals came to power in 2003. So, yes, we can credit them with introducing curbs and controls. But why loosen those constraints?

Wynne said the rules were "modified" because "there was sense that the way they originally had been written they were actually constraining of government to give information." She insisted the "core principle" that partisanship should not be part of government advertising is still in place.

Obviously, the auditor general begs to differ. Last year Lysyk noted that among some \$50-million worth of government ads in 2015-2016, she would have branded several misleading and self-congratulatory under the old rules.

Unfortunately, it's not known how many tax dollars have been forked out for the hydro ads, which ended Aug. 13. But whatever the figure is, it's a safe bet the Liberals consider it money well spent.

Windsor Square OEB Looking for new Hydro Pricing

By: Robert Tuomi
29 August 2017

<http://www.windsorsquare.ca/archives/2017/oeb-looking-for-new-hydro-pricing/106674>

(TORONTO, ON) – The Ontario Energy Board plans to use three pilot projects to explore different ways to give residential hydro customers greater choice in the prices they pay for electricity at different times. High on its list of objectives is to help Ontarians better understand and manage their electricity use.

OEB Chair Rosemarie Leclair is hoping the projects will capture, "... real-world experience of an expected 18,000 customers to inform how electricity is priced for Regulated Price Plan customers in the future, unlocking more value for them and the electricity system as a whole in the process."

To this end, the OEB has selected Alectra Utilities, London Hydro, and Oshawa PUC Networks to run the pilots. It is all part and parcel of the OEB's on-going review of the RPP under which it sets the prices paid by more than 90% of the province's electricity customers.

"Customers want more choice in how they pay for electricity," said Ceiran Bishop, manager of strategic policy for the OEB. He adds that the, "... pilots will help us in our redesign of RPP prices, so they can better match customers' preferences and give them greater control over their electricity costs while also helping to improve system efficiency."

Several alternatives to the current approach to time-of-use pricing will be reviewed during the program.

Alectra is testing a plan to have a larger difference between off- and on-peak prices. It will test how customers respond to an enriched incentive to shift consumption into lower-priced periods.

Customers who wish to opt out of any of the pilots can do so.

Blackburn News Project Offers Lower Hydro Bills

By: Miranda Chant
AUGUST 29, 2017 1:09PM

<http://blackburnnews.com/london/london-news/2017/08/29/pilot-project-offers-lower-hydro-bills/>

London Hydro is looking for homeowners interested in testing out new pricing structures and smart energy devices.

The utility is among three in the province selected by the Ontario Energy Board to run a pilot project which gives customers greater choice in the price they pay for electricity, and tips based on real time usage to lower their consumption rates.

"The idea is to help customers understand when and how they are using electricity. Hopefully with that and with some energy tips that would be provided it would allow them to shift to the off peak time or the less expensive time for using electricity," said Nancy Hutton, London Hydro spokesperson.

Customers have to opt into the Real Time Pilot Package or the Critical Peak Pricing Pilot Package. Both programs use an app developed by London Hydro to monitor and control appliances. The real time program will see a smart energy hub and smart plug installed in the home. Devices plugged into the smart plug, which allows up to 15 amp loads, can be controlled from a smart phone through the app.

"You also have, through the app, access to real time pricing. So what that means is with the smart meters they record the usage every five minutes. With a smart app that information is loaded through a program we have developed and customers can actually see how much energy they've consumed at any given time during the day," said Hutton. "So if you're doing a major task around your home and wanted to monitor or look at how much energy was used during that task you can do that through this program."

The critical peak program offers the same as the real time program but with the addition of a load controller wired into the home's electrical panel. The homeowner then selects up to five appliances that would be switched off using the controller by London Hydro for two hours periods during times when hydro usage is soaring.

"For customers with the controller their off peak period would be one cent less per kilowatt hour for the entire year that they are involved in the program. So they would get the reduced off peak price. If they don't override them then all of their electricity consumption off peak would be at 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour instead of 6.5 cents," said Hutton.

The pilot program is being used to test alternatives to the current approach to time-of-use pricing and will run for one year beginning this winter.

In London, 2,000 customers can choose to sign up for each of the two programs at no cost. Those who opt in will also be given 150 Aeroplan Miles. The only obligation is that pilot program customers must participate in two surveys in the middle and end of the test period. However, customers can choose to leave the program at anytime.

London Hydro was the first utility in Ontario to be approved for the pilot program. Oshawa PUC Networks Inc. and Alectra Utilities, which serves the Hamilton and St. Catharines, Peel, Simcoe, and York Regions, were also approved for the pilot.

To register for the London pilot program or for more information visit jointhepilot.ca.

Sudbury North Bay businesses to save on hydro

By: Jennifer Hamilton-McCharles
Tuesday, August 29, 2017 3:24:00 EDT AM

<http://www.thesudburystar.com/2017/08/29/north-bay-businesses-to-save-on-hydro>

Some of the biggest employers in North Bay will see a significant cut on their hydro rates.

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault was in North Bay Monday to announce the recent expansion to the Industrial Conservation Initiative under Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan.

Canadore College is the most recent business that has signed up for the program and is expecting to save up to one-third of its hydro costs.

The college is hoping to reduce its electricity bill by \$250,000 to \$1 million spread over the next three years.

Thibeault said the Liberals have expanded the program to allow more businesses to benefit from the cost savings.

Businesses consuming one megawatt and those with an average monthly peak demand greater than 500 kilowatts in the manufacturing and greenhouse sectors will benefit from the program.

"This program started a few years ago at five megawatts and then it was dropped to three megawatts. When I took over as energy minister I looked at dropping it even more to help businesses and lower it to one megawatt. Through the Fair Hydro Plan some specific companies can qualify now after using 500 kilowatts."

When asked whether he would consider lowering it even further to allow more businesses to tap into the savings, he said he wasn't sure if that would happen.

"I'm not sure if lowering the threshold would make a difference."

Todd Wilcox, chief executive officer at North Bay Hydro, thinks so.

He said under the current eligibility there are 10 to 15 customers that might be able to participate. Initially, one customer was eligible before the province lowered the threshold.

"I'm hopeful that they will lower it down even further so more customers can participate in this program. If I had my way I would lower it down to 50 kilowatts, which would open up the program to 300 or 400 small businesses in North Bay."

Wilcox said the program is good news for the city and for business.

He said four of the larger businesses in the city are signed up, however a further four or five businesses are eligible.

"These businesses are some of the major employers in town and a major contributor to the local economy. If we get some of those companies to participate, the savings are quite significant and the money stays local," Wilcox said during a news conference at Canadore College's Commerce Court Campus.

"The electricity bill for some of the city's larger employers is around \$100,000 per month, the savings with this program could be \$25,000 to \$30,000 a month. That puts their cost per kilowatt hour competitive with almost any place in North America."

Wilcox said to participate in the program, businesses have to work to achieve the savings.

"It's not automatic. You have to avoid consumption in your facility during the five peak provincial hours. There's no telling when those five hours will occur. So you have to watch the grid, which you can do online and is usually during hot temperatures in the summer," he said.

"Once the peak occurs you want to reduce your consumption. You have to hit those five hours to enjoy the perks. So you have to turn things off and reduce consumption."

But not everyone is convinced.

Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli said this announcement is another desperate pre-election attempt.

He warned voters that Premier Kathleen Wynne will raise hydro rates if elected.

"Many businesses are leaving the province. We had terrible news last week when General Electric announced they were leaving Peterborough, affecting 358 employees," Fedeli said.

"Another huge company in Chatham-Kent announced it was moving to Michigan. Wynne made Ontario the most expensive jurisdiction to do business," he said.

"Sadly we will see more and more continue to leave. Announcements like these aren't fooling the business community."

Nugget: The opposition is looking a little ... wobbly'

By: Bob Bruton

Tuesday, August 29, 2017 9:14:05 EDT AM

<http://www.nugget.ca/2017/08/29/the-opposition-is-looking-a-little--wobbly>

Hiking minimum wage while cutting hydro rates might be turning fortunes around for Ontario Liberals.

The last nine of months of government-commissioned polling, obtained by the Canadian Press through a Freedom of Information request, suggests improving public opinion fortunes for a now somewhat less-unpopular Liberal government.

It found large support for the government's plan for a \$15 minimum wage, general support for carbon pricing, though not necessarily its specifics, and even improving assessments of the hydro file, where the government has been consistently hammered.

But Barry Woods, retired Georgian College political science professor, said he doesn't put much stock in the poll results.

"I don't know if the premier is that popular. I'm a little sceptical," he said. "The people I talk to ... they really dislike her. I think that if the Liberals are up, it's because the Conservatives are down."

This comes less than a year from the next Ontario election in June, 2018.

Woods noted the provincial Progressive Conservatives and their leader Patrick Brown, also Simcoe North MPP, have some issues with their own riding associations and candidates ahead of next year's vote.

"The opposition is looking a little ... wobbly," he said. "I don't think it's because Wynne is a popular person or that people have suddenly started to feel the Liberals are good with the purse strings, which they're not. They haven't been."

The polling was done by the Gandalf Group, and headed by the man leading the Liberals' 2018 re-election bid.

An Angus Reid survey in June put Wynne's approval rating at 15% - up from 12% in March.

"I can remember saying six months ago why doesn't Wynne resign, for the good of the party, let someone else have some time to establish him or herself as someone a little bit different than her," Woods said.

McMaster University political science professor Henry Jacek said Wynne sees a way to electoral victory with popular policies, but she is still personally unpopular.

"I can see how she sees the path forward in terms of the policies, but I still think there are so many red flags out there," Jacek said. "When people sour on a leader it's very hard to bring them back. They could have the best policies in the world."

A turning point in the polling came in March, when the Liberals announced a cut to hydro bills; though in perhaps a sign of how poorly the government had been viewed up to that point, the pollsters cheered not an improvement in the numbers, but a lack of further decline.

'Assessment of the government's overall performance and assessment of the government's management of electricity prices have stayed constant from February through March,' reads a report to the cabinet office. 'These are measures that have been consistently eroding over the past several months, so remaining constant is a step in the right direction.'

The worst overall month for the Liberals came in January, with 61% of respondents saying it was on the

wrong track. By July, that was down to 49%, versus 43% saying the government was on the right track - a gap that hadn't been that narrow since July 2016.

January's numbers also might point to why the government in March announced a further 17% cut to electricity bills. An 8% cut had already taken effect on Jan. 1, but still 46% of respondents said what came to mind on electricity was increasing costs, versus just 4% who cited the 8% rebate.

After March's hydro announcement, that swung dramatically the other way, with 45% of people citing 'government reducing cost'.

Since then, the government's performance rating on electricity prices increased steadily, with 44% of respondents in July calling it excellent or good, up from 34% in March.

More than three-quarters of respondents – or 79% - said they supported the Fair Hydro Plan, though a much smaller number - 55% - said they actually believed their bill would decrease by the promised 25%.

Woods doesn't buy that either.

"I think the thing about the hydro rates was just kicking that part of the debt down the road a little bit," he said. "I think a lot of people saw that as fairly transparent."

When it comes to the government's cap-and-trade system, the polling suggested Ontarians are very supportive in principle, but less so on the specifics.

In November, when the program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions hadn't yet been implemented, 85% of respondents supported limiting the amount of pollution businesses can emit, though only 52% supported Ontario's system.

And while 60% agreed it was right to encourage businesses to reduce air pollution even if it led to higher costs for consumers, only 46% and 42%, respectively, were OK with cap-and-trade adding four cents per litre on gasoline and \$13 per month to energy fuel costs. Given this, the pollsters suggest a line of messaging for the government.

Support for cap and trade dropped after the plan was implemented in January, but still had the support of 50% of respondents.

Wynne's most recent major policy, a \$15 minimum wage, among other labour reforms, has been very well received, the polling suggests.

In July, 71% of respondents said they supported the policy.

With files by The Canadian Press

Simcoe Power-pricing pilot project launched in Barrie

August 29, 2017

<https://www.simcoe.com/community-story/7526666-power-pricing-pilot-project-launched-in-barrie/>

Ten-thousand Alectra Utilities' customers in Simcoe County and York Region are taking part in a power-pricing pilot project that offers greater choice at different times of day.

The trial, which offers more flexibility to power users, will run until Dec. 31, 2018.

"With affordability as a top priority, I'm pleased the Ontario Energy Board and Alectra are taking the next step in offering more flexibility and choice to families, while helping to reduce their electricity bills even further," Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said during a media conference at a Barrie home Aug. 29.

Participants are expected to benefit by shifting some consumption from on-peak to off-peak periods in the three-part plan.

- Enhance plan: This plan is similar to the time-of-use plan that has been available since 2007, but it has one key change: a bigger difference between on-peak and off-peak prices.

- **Dynamic plan:** This plan features a peak period from 3 to 9 p.m. on weekdays (holidays excluded), where the rate is either low, medium or high. This rate is lower than standard time-of-use rates. Customers are alerted a day in advance as to what rate they will have for those peak periods. The Dynamic plan includes six critical peak pricing periods that will last for four hours each. These critical periods will be planned to occur during times the system is under the most demand in the winter and summer seasons.

- **Overnight plan:** This plan features a similar schedule to standard time-of-use, but with the addition of a super off-peak rate from midnight to 6 a.m. This is designed for customers with large flexible loads, like electric vehicles, or who work shifts, to use electricity when system costs are low.

"The expansion of Alectra's pilot project means more families in Barrie have the opportunity to save on their monthly electricity bills. Through this innovative project, customers are given more options to take control of their electricity usage and reduce household energy costs," Barrie MPP Ann Hoggarth said.

More information about Advantage Power Pricing and the three plans is available at www.alectrautilities.com/AdvantagePower.

North Bay Nipissing Minister of Energy highlights benefits of hydro college

August 29, 2017

<https://www.northbaynipissing.com/news-story/7526515-minister-of-energy-highlights-benefits-of-hydro-plan-for-north-bay-college/>

NORTH BAY — Canadore College is one of the businesses that will see reduced electricity costs from recent expansions to the Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI) under Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, according to Minister of Energy and MPP for Sudbury Glenn Thibeault, who made the announcement Monday, Aug. 28 at the college.

"With the recent expansions to the Industrial Conservation Initiative included in Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, eligible organizations that reduce their peak energy consumption will see their electricity bills lowered," explained Thibeault. "These savings will help ensure Canadore College can continue to offer a high-quality education for local students in North Bay."

The ICI allows large electricity users to lower their electricity costs by up to one-third by reducing their electricity use during peak hours.

Starting July 1, Ontario expanded this program to provide electricity bill reductions to more organizations and businesses across the province, including:

- All electricity consumers with average monthly peak demand greater than 1 megawatt (MW); and
- Electricity consumers with an average monthly peak demand greater than 500 kilowatts (kW) and less than 1 MW in the manufacturing and greenhouse sectors.

"We all stand to win by embracing preservation and conservation strategies, especially when we do so as a collective," said George Burton, president of Canadore College. "The ICI is even further incentive for northern industries and academia to work together to find new and innovative solutions to moderate our global impact and reduce expenses."

Sudbury Thibeault announces new trial electricity pricing plans

By: Sue Sgambati
August 29, 2017

<https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/thibeault-announces-new-trial-electricity-pricing-plans-on-front-lawn-of-barrie-home-705911>

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault held a news conference outside an east end Barrie home to

announce new test pricing for electricity.

Three utilities in Ontario, including Alectra in Simcoe County, will run pilot projects to explore different pricing structures for electricity bills.

Phase 1 of Alectra's expanded Advantage Power Pricing pilot program begins Friday with up to 10,000 Alectra Utilities customers voluntarily participating for the chance to save up to \$500.

"We're turning to the need to give consumers greatly flexibility and choice in their electricity pricing plans," said Thibeault.

"A retired couple living in Barrie should be offered a different pricing plan than the young professional condo dweller living in downtown Toronto."

One Barrie couple who's already been participating in the initial Advanced Pricing Pilot that began in 2015 hosted the dignitaries and lauded the plan.

"The results my husband and I have seen are fantastic. We have saved almost \$400 all within the pricing structure that fits our family's lifestyle and patterns," said homeowner and small business owner Barbara Armstrong.

"The concept of getting up, getting a load of laundry through the washer and dryer before 7 in the morning for somebody like me who is retired isn't going to happen so this is great," added her husband Alex.

The three pilot projects are:

1. Advantage Power Pricing - Enhanced Plan: The Enhanced plan is similar to the Time-of-Use plan that has been available to Ontarians since 2007, but it has one key change: a bigger difference between On-peak and Off-peak prices. This wider rate gap lets participants cut electricity costs if they shift their usage to Off-peak hours.
2. Advantage Power Pricing - Dynamic Plan: The Dynamic plan features a peak period between 3:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weekdays (holidays excluded) where the rate is either Low, Medium or High. At all other times on this plan an Off-peak rate applies. This rate is lower than standard Time-of-Use rates. Customers are alerted a day in advance as to what rate they will have for those peak periods. This gives them the opportunity to adjust their usage accordingly. Additionally, the Dynamic plan includes six Critical Peak Pricing periods which will last for four hours each. These critical periods will be planned to occur during times the system is under the most demand in the winter and summer seasons.
3. Advantage Power Pricing - Overnight Plan: The Overnight plan features a similar schedule to standard Time-of-Use, but with the addition of a Super Off-peak rate from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. This is designed for customers with large flexible loads, like electric vehicles, or who work shifts, to use electricity when system costs are low.

The utilities are also testing giving customers smart thermostats to help them control electricity usage.

Alectra President and CEO Brian Bentz said the plan is about empowering consumers.

"To give them more choice so that they can save money by using electricity in more off-peak periods than on-peak periods and it has the added benefit of reducing the strain on the electricity system as well. So consumers save money, they have more choice and the power grid has less strain on it," Bentz said.

Barrie MPP Ann Hoggarth called it an 'exciting pilot project.'

"The expansion of Alectra's pilot project means that more families in Barrie have the opportunity to save on their monthly electricity bills. Through this innovative project, customers are given more options to take control of their electricity usage and reduce household energy costs," Hoggarth said.

Thibeault noted the governments recent reductions in electricity costs under the Fair Hydro Plan and how the system is now 'clean.'

"We also don't have smog days in Ontario anymore. But that did come with a cost," he said.

"Today's announcement is about fairness and choice. We can do that with our internet packages and our cable packages. We need to start evolving."

For more information visit Alectra Utilities

C T V News: York-Simcoe to test pick-and-pay power plan

By: Adam Ward

Tuesday, August 29, 2017 6:36PM EDT

<http://barrie.ctvnews.ca/york-simcoe-to-test-pick-and-pay-power-plan-1.3566815>

Pick-and-pay hydro pricing will be tested in a large part of Simcoe County and York Region. Beginning Sept. 1, the province and Alectra Utilities will offer three hydro plans curated to power use for individual households.

"We're turning to the need to give consumers greater flexibility and choice on their electricity pricing plans," says Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault. "Ontarians should be able to purchase electricity based on the pricing plans that best suit their lifestyles."

Thibeault says a retired couple living in Barrie should be offered a different pricing plan than someone living in a condo in downtown Toronto.

"Time-of-use pricing has enabled customers to better manage their costs by reducing or shifting consumption to off-peak times when electricity is less expensive to produce," he says.

One of the plans offers off-peak hours for most of the day except between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m., while another one aims to reduce costs for people who use a good portion of electricity overnight.

Alectra has been offering a similar pilot project since 2015. It will now serve as a pilot project for the Ontario Energy Board. If successful, it could be expanded to people across the province.

"Customers save money, they have more choice and the power grid has less strain on it," says Brian Bentz, president and CEO of Alectra.

By the end of 2018, officials hope to have 14,000 customers signed up to try it out.

C T V News: New pick-and-pay hydro plan launches in Ontario

Tuesday, August 29, 2017 7:10PM EDT

<http://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/new-pick-and-pay-hydro-plan-launches-in-ontario-1.3567433>

Hydro consumers in Ottawa are watching closely as the Ontario Government unveils a new pick-and-pay hydro pricing plan in towns around the Greater Toronto Area.

Alectra has been offering a similar pilot project since 2015. It will now serve as a pilot project for the Ontario Energy Board.

The new pilot project was launched in Barrie Tuesday, one of several towns chosen by the government to test out a new billing model. Oshawa, York Region and London will also take part in the \$17.5 million dollar project being paid for by the conservation fund of the Independent Electricity System Operator.

"This is offering fairness and choice and I think that's what people really want to see," said Glenn Thibeault, Ontario's Energy Minister.

The new plan will allow consumers in the pilot to choose when they want to pay the least for electricity based on their usage. There's a plan suited to shift workers, offering reduced hydro costs between midnight and 6 a.m. and a plan for snowbirds offering a flat-fee for hydro in the Spring and Fall with increased pricing during the Winter and the Summer.

For Shawn Kenny and his busy family of four the plan is plan is enticing.

"I typically do laundry at night, but sometimes schedules just don't allow that," he said. "The options would be useful."

Roughly 18,000 hydro clients will be able to enroll in the pilot project starting on September 1st.

The government said the pilot will end sometime in 2018. If all goes well the pilot could extend to every household in Ontario.

There is no talk, at this point, of lowering the controversial distribution fee.

Global News Some Ontario utilities to test new electricity pricing

By: The Canadian Press
August 29, 2017 7:17 am

<http://globalnews.ca/news/3703064/some-ontario-utilities-to-test-new-electricity-pricing/>

Three utilities in Ontario will run pilot projects to explore different pricing structures for electricity bills.

The Ontario Energy Board says the projects include testing alternatives to the current time-of-use pricing and giving customers smart thermostats.

Alectra Utilities, which serves the Hamilton and St. Catharines, Peel, Simcoe and York Regions, London Hydro and Oshawa PUC Networks Inc. were selected for the pilots.

The pilot projects include testing having a larger difference in price between off-peak and on-peak periods, which the OEB says will test how customers respond to a higher incentive to shift their electricity consumption to the lower-priced periods.

Other pricing projects include having a lower-priced period from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. year round with higher mid- and on-peak rates; eliminating the mid-peak period for three months each in the summer and winter with a higher critical peak rate for when demand is forecast to be highest.

The utilities are also testing giving customers smart thermostats to help them control electricity usage.