Evening Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - June 7, 2017

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Evening Media Scan: June 7, 2017

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

June 7, 2017

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Online Coverage

Windsor Star: Green Energy Act is a failure

CBC News: Customers stunned Hydro One asking for rate increase

TV Transcripts

None

Online Coverage

Windsor Star: Green Energy Act is a failure

Windsor Star
Wed Jun 7 2017
Section: Letters
Byline: Julian Revin

The false dilemma portrayed by the Liberals in Ontario about the environment and the Green Energy Act is tiring. Through their rhetoric anyone opposed to the failed Green Energy Act is portrayed as a climate change denying simpleton. Frankly, this line of attack does us no favours.

It is completely acceptable to acknowledge the abysmal failure the Act has been and still be cognizant of environmental protection. What's more dangerous is the Liberal government blindly ignoring these failures and instead bribing voters with a refinance plan, which it claims will save voters 25 per cent on their hydro bills.

What they fail to mention is the fact that most hydro bills have climbed much more than 25 per cent and their plan will cost $45 billion to save $24 billion. Sadly, the Liberal's own internal documents show rates will continue to climb after the election.

The Green Energy Act costs have been prohibitively expensive for little environmental benefit. The Act has been a major drag on the economy. It has increased hydro rates, driven out manufacturing and divided rural communities.

Additionally, we've replaced lower-cost hydroelectric production with inefficient turbines and produced untimely energy surpluses that we give away to neighbouring jurisdictions.

Instead of accepting the fact that the Green Energy Act is not working, the government is opting for a Band-Aid solution. It's easier for the Liberal government to spend years labelling and portraying critics of the Act as out-of-touch climate deniers.

I don't know if it's an attempt to save face or another example of this government's holier-than-thou, callous attitude, but I suspect it's a combination of both.

Scott Fenn, St. Clair Beach

CBC News: Customers stunned Hydro One asking for rate increase

CBC.CA News
Wed Jun 7 2017, 5:00am ET
Section: Ottawa
Byline: CBC

Some Hydro One customers want to know why the utility has applied to raise its distribution rates when electricity prices have become unmanageable for so many Ontario residents.

If the company's recent application to the Ontario Energy Board is approved, customers could see an average increase of $2.35 per month over the next five years starting in January 2018.

"I was actually pretty stunned," said Doug Bateson.

Bateson became a Hydro One customer after moving to Greely from Ottawa four years ago. He said he can't understand why the company is applying to increase rates when the government is handing out subsidies to help manage electricity costs.

"We're probably paying about $60 more per month than what we were paying when we were with Ottawa Hydro."

Bateson said his last bill totalled $173.69, with $70.74 going towards the delivery charge. He said although he feels it's a lot to pay, he admits his bill isn't as high as it is for some.

"I'm fortunate enough that it's not crippling me. We are really, really conscious of electricity," he said. "Virtually nothing that we do is done during the peak period."

Bateson said he'd like the Ontario Energy Board to provide a user-friendly breakdown of electricity costs for consumers so they understand how hydro works and why increases are needed.

"Why do we pay what we pay?" he said. "We constantly seem to be having to pay more and more money for it and no one seems to be able to give a real clear, concise ? and I would say believable ? explanation as to why."

About 45,000 households in Ottawa are Hydro One customers, despite the municipality's efforts to transfer them to Hydro Ottawa.

An aging system

Hydro One says it need to raise rates to pay for necessary system upgrades and maintenance.

"We have a system that's aging," said Ferio Pugliese, Hydro One's executive vice president of corporate affairs.

"We have poles and wires and stations that are used to service the distribution system and ... that system is aging and in decline. In order to keep it and maintain it so that it's reliable ... we have to continue to invest in it."

Pugliese also pointed even with the proposed modest rate increase, Hydro One customers will still see their hydro bills decrease overall due to the province's recently announced subsidies.

Hydro bills will decrease: province

The Fair Hydro Act 2017, which was passed last week, will lower electricity bills for residential consumers in Ontario by an average of 25 per cent for all residential customers. For rural or low-income Hydro One customers, the hydro savings would be 40 to 50 per cent.

In a statement to CBC News, Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said regardless of the outcome of the OEB's process, Hydro One customers will not see an increase to their bills. "We've been clear that Ontarians will see a significant decrease in their overall bills this summer through Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan," said Thibeault.

Nor is it guaranteed that Hydro One's application will be successful.

"We've also been extremely clear that Hydro One ? like all utilities in Ontario ? does not have the power to set its own distribution rates," said the minister. "It must submit an application with the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), an independent, quasi-judicial body with a mandate to protect Ontario energy consumers. The OEB does not approve all applications, and the Fair Hydro Plan will hold any increases to the rate of inflation for four years."

The OEB will hold community meetings across the province starting next week to provide information about the proposed increase. A meeting has been scheduled in Ottawa's Rockland neighbourhood on Tuesday, June 20 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Club Powers at the Columbian Hall at 954 Giroux Street. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

TV Transcripts

None