

Morning Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction - May 10, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

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Print Coverage

Toronto Sun: 'Wynne doing even more damage to hydro system'; A6; 2017.05.10

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'Wynne doing even more damage to hydro system'

It's one of Premier Kathleen Wynne's most controversial choices, and now she's doubling down on it. The Ontario government announced Monday that it would sell off another chunk of Hydro One, letting public ownership in the massive utility drop below 50% for the first time. On the line is an extra \$3 billion for the Wynne government, which it says it plans to spend on needed infrastructure.

Reaction was quick.

"Let me be clear, on behalf of our union, on behalf of the tens of thousands of Ontarians who are part of the Keep Hydro Public Coalition - we will continue to fight against the sale of Hydro One until the Liberals stop this wrongheaded plan, both in the courts and on the ground." - CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn

"The sale of Hydro One was always intended to transfer a treasured public asset to private investors for the sole purpose of enriching those investors. At the urging of pirate captain Ed Clark, her adviser/boss, Premier Kathleen Wynne betrayed the people of Ontario." - OPSEU president Warren "Smokey" Thomas

"By giving up the province's majority stake in Hydro One, Kathleen Wynne is doing even more damage to our hydro system. Her short-sighted sell-off of Hydro One will drive up electricity bills for the residents, businesses and municipalities of our province." - NDP Leader Andrea Horwath

"The government is still trying to spin their fire sale of Hydro One ... The reality is people in Ontario aren't buying it. When they announced this, they pitched to Ontarians they were going to spend the money on infrastructure ... They haven't spent any of the money so far on infrastructure. I don't want to sell a majority of Hydro One. ... This is a desperate measure by a government that is embroiled in their own scandals and waste." - PC Leader Patrick Brown

"With the completion of this transaction, the government will have surpassed our financial targets and raised billions for transit, transportation and other priority infrastructure projects and, as a result, we do not anticipate any further offerings of Hydro One shares owned by the province." - Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault

- With files from Sue-Ann Levy

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Welland Tribune: Canadian Niagara Power rates go up, but bills drop; A1 / Front;
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Canadian Niagara Power rates go up, but bills drop

Canadian Niagara Power's distribution rates are increasing, but its customers'hydro bills will be going down effective May 1 and is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2017.

The rates will affect all 27,600 customers Canadian Niagara Power Inc. serves - 24,000 of which are spread out between Port Colborne and Fort Erie.

Kristine Carmichael, director of corporate and customer services with the hydro company, explained the situation to Port Colborne council on Monday night.

"The base distribution charges are going to go up on average \$2.03 a month," she said of the average residential user. "But there are also rate riders and transmission charges that are going down."

Although the distribution rates are going up, other areas including the rate riders, transmission charges and regulatory charges are decreasing. The time of use cost of power's decrease is also factoring into overall bills going down. She said these changes are coming primarily because of the fair hydro plan. Outlined in her presentation, Carmichael showed council that before May 1, the average customer would be paying roughly \$146.08 a month on their CNP bill. Now they will be paying roughly \$134.84, a difference of \$11.24 a month.

She said every five years, CNP files a cost of service rate application with the Ontario Energy Board, and distribution rates are based on inflation.

The distribution charges go towards CNP's capital and operation, maintenance and administration projects and programs.

Carmichael explained operation, maintenance and administration programs focus on things such as tree trimming and customer service.

Capital projects are long-term investments, such as poles, wires and substations. For 2017, CNP has a budget of nearly \$10 million for capital investments, which, in Port Colborne, will go towards a new distribution substation on the south side, other distribution system upgrades and new residential subdivisions.

"We also have within the broader application \$750,000 in the distribution automation five-year plan," she said. "So that will improve response times and restoration times on outages."

That spurred questions from councillors about power interruptions and power outages across Port Colborne, including the citywide outage earlier this year.

"I constantly see people complain about (power interruptions) on social media," said Ward 2 Coun. Angie Desmarais, inquiring, too, about what causes them and any potential solutions.

Carmichael explained these momentary outages can be caused by something as simple as a branch touching a wire, which causes the line to detect a fault and then when the branch moves the power is restored. She said more investigation can be done into that specific area.

As for the citywide power outage, she reminded council that was a problem on Hydro One's end of things, not CNP's.

To ensure customers continue to be satisfied, Carmichael said CNP regularly has contact with them through social media, focus groups and the call centre.

There is also an opportunity for customers to speak face-to-face with someone at CNP at the company's Your Kilowatt Hour days. The next is June 23, and customers can set up a 10-to 15-minute appointment to meet with someone from CNP at Port Cares to discuss questions and concerns. Other dates for such meetings are Aug. 25, Oct. 20 and Dec. 15. Appointments can be set up by calling 905-835-0051.

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