

Morning Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - April 21, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

April 21, 2017

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Print Coverage

Sarnia Observer: County zapped by electricity rebate criteria; A3; 2017.04.21

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PAGE: A3
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BYLINE: Barbara Simpson
SOURCE: Sarnia Observer
KEYWORDS: electricity,rebates,appear,helping,rural,municipalities
WORD COUNT: 366

County zapped by electricity rebate criteria

Ontario's much-hyped electricity rebates don't appear to be helping cash-strapped rural municipalities as much as anticipated.

The County of Lambton is anticipating it'll save just about \$165,000 in energy costs this year as a direct result of the province's 8 per cent rebate that came into effect Jan. 1.

And despite the introduction of a new 17 per cent rebate - anticipated to come into effect this summer - the county is just projecting an additional \$170,000 in savings through that rebate this year.

Those savings come from the 60 different county-run locations with electrical services.

"I was kind of amazed that you've indicated we're only saving \$170,000," Brooke-Alvinston Mayor Don McGugan told county finance staff during a Wednesday committee meeting.

The County of Lambton hasn't seen more savings so far because only some of its buildings qualify for the 8 per cent rebate, said John Innes, the county's general manager of finance.

Under provincial rules, the 8 per cent rebate is only available to residential customers, multi-unit dwellings in a residential complex, general service customers using less than 50 kilowatts and general service customers using more than 50 kilowatts if their annual usage is less than 250,000 kilowatts per hour per year.

For the County of Lambton, that means most of its social housing units and smaller properties, like ambulance bases, are receiving the rebate but not its larger non-residential locations, according to a staff report prepared for Wednesday's meeting.

McGugan said his municipality is also struggling to capitalize on the electricity rebate.

"My arena isn't covered, but my water and sewage plants are," he said.

Innes said municipalities are essentially being asked to prioritize their electricity usage.

"From the province's standpoint, you can choose to not run your arena, but you can't not run your water plant," he said.

County finance staff are trying to find out the province's criteria for the 17 per cent rebate, Innes noted, but details have so far been scarce.

McGugan said it's also been a struggle for his municipality to get more information about the rebate criteria directly from the province.

"I don't think anyone knows what's going on except the premier." bsimpson@postmedia.com

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The Belleville Intelligencer: MPP points to waste; Todd Smith criticizes Ontario Liberals for state of provincial energy situation; A2; 2017.04.21

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ILLUSTRATION: Bruce Bell, The Intelligencer / Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Todd Smith (right) listens as Prince Edward County Chamber of Tourism and Commerce president Gil Leclerc addresses the audience at the organization's annual general meeting on Thursday morning. Smith was the quest speaker and told the crowd at the Prince Edward Yacht Club the province's energy sector is a huge mess.;

DATELINE: PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

WORD COUNT: 589

MPP points to waste; Todd Smith criticizes Ontario Liberals for state of provincial energy situation

If an Easter egg was worth a dollar, Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Todd Smith says the Liberal government laid 78 million of them on the recent holiday weekend.

Smith, who was recently appointed as the Conservative party's energy critic, spoke to the Prince Edward County Chamber of Tourism and Commerce at its annual general meeting Thursday morning and told members his new role has opened his eyes to massive waste in the energy sector.

"As the energy critic it's been a really interesting learning experience the last couple of months (because) when I was elected in 2011 I felt I knew a lot about the energy sector in Ontario, but in the last two weeks I've felt like I've been drinking through a fire hose," he said. "It's unbelievable how much information is out there, how much technology is there and exactly the mess we are in when it comes to the energy sector in Toronto."

Over the Easter weekend, Smith claimed the government settled a lawsuit stemming from a cancelled off-shore wind project for \$28 million and spent another \$50 million on energy costs, flip-flopping between wind, solar and natural gas production.

"The gold rush from the Green Energy Act has cost us deeply and that is the biggest reason while electricity prices are soaring in Ontario - wind turbines and solar panels that are going up across Ontario and continue to go up," he said. "Set the lawsuit aside, the rest of the weekend cost us \$50 million because we were curtailing our nuclear plants which provide electricity for 6.1 cents per kilowatt hour and spilling water over the dams at Niagara Falls and other river facilities - meanwhile we are taking on wind and solar over the weekend... demand was down, yet we were running wind when the wind was blowing, running solar when the sun was shining and to keep all this running properly you're running natural gas as well.

"So we're spilling water from our dams, venting steam from our nuclear facilities and taking expensive, gas, solar and wind and we end up exporting excess energy at a loss to our neighbouring jurisdictions - it's an absolute unnecessary waste."

Earlier this week Smith was at a conference in Southwestern Ontario and said he toured a greenhouse in which the owner told him his natural gas bill has risen from \$4,000 a month to more than \$14,000 as a result of cap and trade tax on natural gas customers.

Smith said costs have skyrocketed at Quinte Health Care facilities and local schools as well.

"That is money now that is not going to be used for front-line health workers, it's not going to pay for

supporting our classrooms, whether it's our early childhood educators, teacher's assistants - you have to have these supports. but now they are being cut back because of the rising cost of energy," he said. "So \$1 million more at Quinte Health Care, \$700,000 more at Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board - there are real concerns."

Smith said Prince Edward County does not need any wind projects and said the Liberals need to cancel any on the books now.

"On the weekend, wpd Canada, the company that wants to put in 29 turbines on the south shore of the County, is thumbing its nose at the environmental review process and clearing vegetation for a project which hopefully won't happen - we don't need these turbines in Prince Edward County and for a variety of reasons." bbell@postmedia.com

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Peterborough Examiner: MPP Scott sends budget letter to finance minister; A4;
2017.04.21

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MPP Scott sends budget letter to finance minister

Dear Minister Charles Sousa, Life is harder for the people of Peterborough and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. My constituents are working harder, paying more, but getting less. They can't afford to be left behind by yet another Liberal budget.

That is why, today, I'm writing to share some of the areas the upcoming provincial budget will need to address for our community. 1. Take action on Ontario's growing debt: Interest payments on the province's debt are beginning to crowd-out the services the people in our community depend on. We've seen reduced access to health care, including overcrowded hospitals and long-term care bed wait-lists that have grown to 4,500 in Peterborough and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Your government's budget must lay out a long-term plan to pay down the province's debt. 2. End Ontario's hydro crisis: I know of countless examples of families, businesses, and public institutions in Peterborough and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock that are suffering every day as a result of unaffordable hydro rates. Businesses like Cedarvilla Holsteins in Selwyn Township have seen their hydro bills triple. Your government must take immediate action to address the root of the problem and stop signing contracts for power we don't need, dismantle the Green Energy Act, stop the fire sale of Hydro One, and rein in exorbitant executive compensation in the energy sector. 3. Address housing affordability: Over the past year, housing prices in Peterborough and the Kawarthas have gone up an average of 33 per cent! This, combined with the hydro crisis, is making it harder for Ontario's families to make ends meet. The government needs to accept the Ontario PC Caucus housing recommendations in the budget, which include introducing evidence-based measures to address both supply and demand, establishing a panel of industry experts, and reviewing the government housing portfolio immediately. 4. Save our schools: After 14 years of scandal, waste, and mismanagement, your government is trying to balance the books on the backs of our students by fast-tracking school closures. Our communities have already been hit by the closure of schools, such as Lakefield District Secondary School. This upcoming budget must include an immediate moratorium on school closures, and an immediate review of the flawed Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline that determines these closures.

I trust that you will seriously consider all of these recommendations. The people of Ontario, who are tired of nearly 14 years of failed Liberal policies, are demanding it.

Thank you,
Laurie Scott, Mpp
Haliburton-Kawartha-Lakes Brock

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