

Morning Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - April 7, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

April 7, 2017

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Print Coverage

The Chronicle Journal: [Thunder Bay-Atikokan MPP Bill Mauro's recent letter showed that he still doesn't get what everyday f]; 2017.04.07

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[Thunder Bay-Atikokan MPP Bill Mauro's recent letter showed that he still doesn't get what everyday f]

Thunder Bay-Atikokan MPP Bill Mauro's recent letter showed that he still doesn't get what everyday families are going through as a result of the Wynne Liberals' skyrocketing hydro prices (NDP Hydro Plan Rings Hollow Compared To Ours, March 25).

Mauro wrote that the NDP plan to cut hydro bills by up to 30 per cent for everyone is "ringing hollow." I disagree. The NDP listens, and a cut to all hydro bills of up to 30 per cent wouldn't be hollow to Ontarians at all.

I think of families like the LaCross family in Sault. Ste. Marie. When Jamie LaCross' bills started topping \$1,000, she shut down the heating and brought in propane heaters for the house instead.

She was desperate to keep her two little boys warm without breaking the bank.

And to Jamie, the NDP plan isn't hollow. It offers hope.

I doubt Mauro and the Wynne Liberals have listened to business in our communities, either. I think of NDP Leader Andrea Horwath's visit a couple of weeks ago with AJ's Trading Post owner Gerry Muller.

Muller wants to create jobs in the Thunder Bay area. He wants to expand into new locations and hire even more people. But sky-high hydro bills are stopping him.

Mauro and Wynne may prefer their party's hydro advertisements - which they're paying for with public money - over the NDP's actual plan to cut hydro bills. That was confirmed when Wynne's Liberals voted in the legislature last week to block the 30-per-cent cut to hydro bills and to support the privatization of Hydro One.

Mauro may not like that the NDP plan will return Hydro One to public hands (which will also generate an additional \$7 billion for the province). And his well-heeled friends may not like it either.

But too many of us in Ontario are at a tipping point. It's time for everyone to pay less for - and own more of - our hydro.

Peter Tabuns

MPP Toronto-Danforth · and NDP Energy Critic

Daily Observer (Pembroke): A plan for fairer bills; A5; 2017.04.07

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A plan for fairer bills

Our provincial government recently announced a plan that will lower residential electricity bills by an average of 25 per cent starting this summer, with no increase beyond inflation for at least four years. This is the biggest rate cut in Ontario's history and will automatically go to all households that pay an electricity bill. Many farms and small businesses will also receive this cut. Some rural customers will see an even higher reduction, in the range of 40 to 50 per cent.

I don't have to tell you why this is needed.

During my travels across the province, I have heard the frustrations of rural Ontarians when it comes to managing their energy bills. Budgets are stretched and it was clear that something needed to be done. For a long time, Ontario enjoyed one of the best electricity systems around. But for decades, governments of all stripes stopped investing. About 15 years ago that caught up with us. Brownouts, blackouts and dirty coal plants were a danger to our health, our environment and our economy.

We closed all of Ontario's coal plants, built new transmission lines and invested in renewable energy. We now have a clean, reliable system that is going to benefit us for decades. But that came at a price. It resulted in \$50 billion dollars in costs being shouldered by one generation.

That was a mistake, and we're correcting it now by stretching the cost of system improvements over a longer term, to more appropriately match how long they will be in use. These changes are fairer for people - because they don't ask today's generation to pay the freight for everyone who came before, and everyone who will benefit from clean energy infrastructure in the future. By stretching those costs out over a time frame that better reflects the life span of the assets we're paying for, we can lower everyone's bills today and keep them from jumping back up.

That's the fairer way forward. Our government understands that those living in rural communities have been paying significantly more in delivery charges than those living in urban areas. That's why we're going even further to help 800,000 rural Ontarians subsidize the high cost of delivering electricity - that's twice the amount of people who will now benefit from lower delivery charges.

With this change, everyone in Ontario is going to be paying roughly the same in delivery charges. Again, it comes down to fairness.

As you can imagine, these huge and lasting structural fixes do come with a cost. We can afford it because of Ontario's strengthening economy, which is the fastest growing in Canada. After a decade of deficits, the provincial budget will be balanced this year. Our recovery is on track, but it hasn't been evenly shared.

Many people I speak to, whether in Bancroft, Belleville or Peterborough, tell me they aren't any better off than they were before the recession. I want you to know that our government is working hard to build Ontario up - by making key investments in areas such as infrastructure, education and economic development that will ensure that as our economy grows, all Ontarians benefit equally.

Giving everyone a break on their electricity bills is not only the fair thing to do but the right thing to do. Jeff Leal Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs Minister Responsible for Small Business

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