

FW: Evening Media Scan: Fair Hydro Plan- March 21, 2017

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Subject: Evening Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - March 21, 2017

MEDIA SCAN: FAIR HYDRO PLAN

March 21, 2017

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Online Coverage

CBC News: Joe's sees hydro bill double in just six years

By: Andres Billiald

Mar 21, 2017

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/st-joe-s-sees-hydro-bill-double-in-just-six-years-1.4034986>

St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton paid more than \$8 million for electricity in 2016, 104 per cent more than it did six years earlier.

Those numbers were front and centre at Queen's Park yesterday as the Ontario NDP revealed dramatic increases in hospital electricity bills to continue to hammer the Liberal government over increasing power costs in the province.

For the NDP, the extra millions hospitals have to put toward hydro come at a time when the NDP say the Liberal government is under-funding health care across Ontario.

NDP Ontario leader Andrea Horwath addressed the issue Tuesday in Queen's Park saying the costly bills are putting even more pressure on patient care.

"It's clear that hydro costs are hurting families in more ways than one – it's hurting people every month when the bill comes," Horwath said. "It's also hurting the services we count on, like hospitals."

She also cited electricity increases for hospitals in London and Windsor.

Horwath said hydro rates have already cost Ontario's healthcare dearly.

"Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario," said Horwath, who is MPP for Hamilton Centre.

"There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills,

hospitals are being squeezed tighter."

In reply to her question about St. Joe's, Erik Hoskins, minister of health and long-term care in Ontario, curiously spoke of an increase the province provided to Hamilton Health Science, Hamilton's other corporation.

"I'm pleased to support to the legislature we provided an increase of 3.6 per cent to [Hamilton Health Sciences], \$29.4 million more to their operating budget than the previous year."
Ont Throne Speech 20160912

Ontario Provincial NDP Leader Andrea Horwath addressed Queen's Park Tuesday saying the hydro rates have cost Ontario health care dearly. (Peter Power/Canadian Press)

Hydro rates in Ontario have been a hot-button topic since rates began increasing in 2015. After a trying 2016 that saw public backlash peak after reports surfaced of hydro companies cutting off power in the dead of winter, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a long-awaited decrease for hydro rates in Ontario.

Earlier this month, Premier Kathleen Wynne unveiled a plan that would slash residential and small business hydro bills by an average of 17 per cent and see billions in costs lifted off customers in the short term.
Ont Hyrdo 20170302

The Liberal government unveiled its plan in early March to cut hydro bills, which are the biggest political issue it faces less than a year-and-a-half away from an election. (Frank Gunn/The Canadian Press)

It meant that some \$28 billion in costs would be refinanced, with future ratepayers shouldering the interest.

Maria Hayes, senior public affairs specialist for St. Joe's said while the hospital saw its hydro bills increase, its consumption went up as well — by roughly 27 per cent. That's because during that period, the hospital had a major expansion, opening its West 5th campus, which focuses on mental health and diagnostic services.

"St. Joe's has taken a number of actions to decrease utility costs across our sites and will continue to look for further opportunities for savings," Hayes said. "We welcome any form of relief to help address these costs."
'Health care is at a tipping point'

Hoskins said he has yet to hear of a hospital struggling to pay their hydro bill.

"In the almost three years I've been minister of health I have not had a single hospital board or CEO come to me and say the component of their budget that goes towards electricity has been a burden to them."

According to the NDP, a number of complaints have been made by hospitals across the province that have seen hydro bills affect their budgets with one Windsor hospital expecting \$700,000 increase on their hydro bill this year.

The Liberal government hoped their 17 per cent decrease might help remedy the issue for hospitals and residents across Ontario but the NDP isn't convinced the Liberal plan will work.

Horwath recently released an NDP plan that would cut hydro bills by as much as 30 per cent. The plan includes putting Hydro One back into public hands, which the NDP say would return an additional \$7 billion to the province that could go toward Ontario services like hospitals.

Blackburn News Windsor Regional Hospital Hydro Bill Increases
By: Kirk Dickinson
March 21, 2017

<http://blackburnnews.com/windsor/windsor-news/2017/03/21/windsor-regional-hospital-hydro-bill-increases-almost-50/>

The cost of electricity at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus has jumped nearly \$1-million over a

five-year period.

Based on information obtained by the NDP, the total billed amount for hydro at the hospital rose from \$1,778,831 to \$2,659,009 between 2011 to 2016. That's an increase of 49%.

"Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario... There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills, hospitals are being squeezed tighter," said NDP Leader Andrea Horwath in a media release. "How can the hospital be expected to continue provide high quality patient care when Premier [Kathleen] Wynne is squeezing them like this?"

On March 2, Wynne announced that her government would take action to reduce Ontarians' hydro bills by a further 17%, on top of the 8% saving that resulted from the lifting of the provincial portion of the HST on hydro.

The NDP also released its hydro plan in late-February. The party claims it can cut hydro bills by 30% by scraping time-of-use premiums, cap profits for private producers, have rural residents pay the same delivery charges as city-dwellers, and reverse the sell-off of Hydro One.

To view a year-to-year break down of hydro costs at the Met Campus, click [here](#).

-With files from Scott Kitching

Black Burn News L HSC: Electricity Costs Jump Almost \$2M

By: Kirk Dickinson

March 21, 2017

<http://blackburnnews.com/london/london-news/2017/03/21/lhsc-electricity-costs-jump-almost-2m/>

Despite a drop in electricity use, the hydro bill for London Health Sciences Centre has jumped 29% over a six-year period.

Between 2010 to 2016, the total annual hydro consumption dropped by 13%, however, the total billed amount for hydro rose from \$6,740,666 to \$8,694,742. The costs account for hydro use at Victoria, University and South Street hospitals.

"Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario... There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills, hospitals are being squeezed tighter," said NDP Leader Andrea Horwath in a media release. "How can the hospital be expected to continue provide high quality patient care when Premier [Kathleen] Wynne is squeezing them like this?"

The cost information was obtained from LHSC through a freedom of information request by NDP Caucus Services. To view the document sent to the NDP, click [here](#).

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-With files from Scott Kitching

TV Transcripts (6 PM)

City TV Opposition Parties Criticize Liberals Over Hydro Ad Cam

Source: City TV

Mar 21, 2017 6:13 PM (5)

Reporter: I'm going to turn to a provincial story now. At Queen's Park today, the Wynne Liberals are getting criticized yet again for publicly funded radio ads praising their move to cut hydro bills by 25 per cent.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They just got scolded last year for abusing taxpayer dollars in this manner with partisan ads and they're right back at it. They don't seem to care what the Auditor General says. They don't seem to care this is disrespectful to taxpayers and they may even be in contempt of Parliament.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader: Their biggest interest is their own political power, their own political position, and their – and this latest move is an attempt for them to, you know, to try to reverse the polls frankly and the free fall that Kathleen Wynne is in right now.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Ontario Premier: We're a political party. We know we've got a campaign in a little over a year. So of course we're doing that kind of work that you would do in a lead-up to an election.

Reporter: Inside the Legislature, the hydro issue got heated on a different front. Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Todd Smith got ejected when he took exception to the Energy Minister's claim the Tories have no plan for hydro relief. Smith insisted they do and was warned about his outburst by the House Speaker.

Global Deputy Premier Clarifies Hydro Pamphlets Are Funded By
Source: Global
Mar 21, 2017 6:08 PM (16)

Anchor: Across Toronto during rush hour Tuesday the Ontario Liberals were busy handing out these pamphlets. On one side, it extols the virtue of the Liberal Hydro Rate Reduction Plan. On the other side, headlines, the big Liberal promise of 25 per cent off hydro. Now here on Global News, we have pointed out that the reduction from the so-called Fair Hydro Plan is actually 17 per cent, not 25 per cent, because the 8 per cent HST rebate is separate. It's already in place. But I'm going to try and let that go. Instead, you might be asking how much those pamphlets cost after the government spent close to \$1 million taxpayer dollars on these radio ads.

[Hydro Radio Ad]: Starting this summer, households in Ontario will receive an average of 25 per cent off their hydro.

Anchor: You know what? Let's do this. Every time you see a Liberal ad promising a 25 per cent cut, just shout out its 17! It will frighten and amuse people around you. But I digress. The fact is there is a difference between that radio ad and those pamphlets.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Ontario Premier: This is political advertising. Other parties do this kind of event, the blitz, letting people know what we're doing. And this is not government advertising at all. This is Liberal Party advertising.

Anchor: So 24 hours ago the Minister of Energy was defending spending public money to tell people about the hydro rate cuts, and now we have essentially identical advertising but this time paid for by the Liberal Party.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They're spending a few dollars of Liberal Party pamphlets and they're spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buys. They are ripping taxpayers off for their own partisan purposes.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader: The tactic that they took this morning is enough, I think, to have people nodding their heads in disgrace over the actions of this government.

Anchor: All of this political elbowing led to an overheated moment on the floor of the Legislature. PC Energy Critic Todd Smith was ejected for un-parliamentary language, but then as you can see here, that is him pointing his finger there. He decided to keep on going. Look at him; he is still going here after finally being escorted out. Now that led to this rebuke from the Speaker that every parent in the world will recognize.

Dave Levac, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this House. That goes for anybody. That's disrespectful and I won't tolerate it.

Anchor: As Ontario residents struggle to pay hydro bills, these kinds of antics don't help anyone. Maybe we should just send all of them to bed without supper.

CBC Liberals Facing Criticism Over Hydro Ads

Source: CBC

Mar 21, 2017 6: 24 PM (7)

Anchor: Patrick Brown continued to hammer away at the Liberals today for a series of ads they've put out about the plan to cut the cost of electricity – a plan that hasn't even been tabled in the Legislature yet.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: Will the Premier stop her re-election campaigning and using taxpayer resources to do it? It's wrong and the Premier knows that.

Yasir Naqvi, Government House Leader: Government has a responsibility to inform Ontarians, to make sure that we raise awareness.

Anchor: The taxpayer-funded ads are for radio and social media. They tell people about the plan to cut hydro bills by an average of 25 per cent this summer.

CFTOMPP Todd Smith Was Escorted Out Of The Legislature Due

Source: CFTO

Mar 21, 2017 6:17 PM (14)

Anchor: Some pretty tense moments at Queen's Park today. The Speaker threatened to expel an MPP, something that is rarely done.

Anchor: It was all part of the charged-up debate surrounding the Liberal use of taxpayer dollars to fund radio ads promoting their hydro plan. CTV's Paul Bliss watching this closely for us. Paul, MPPs are often ejected for the day. What does it mean to be expelled?

Reporter: It means gone for the session, ejected until June. The Speaker told me this afternoon he came this close to making that order but he stopped short. That's a reflection of the testiness here developing over the Liberal hydro plan.

Glenn Thibeault, Energy Minister: They actually have no plan!

Reporter: The ruckus was well under way when the Speaker had enough and gave PC MPP Todd Smith the boot.

Dave Levac, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is named.

Reporter: Watch as an angry Smith refuses to leave. So upset over the Liberals spending tax dollars to promote their 25 per cent hydro cut, he stood his ground, pointed his finger, and yelled. This caused the Sergeant-at-Arms to approach and escort him out of the chamber, venting his frustration even as he was ejected.

House Speaker Levac: The member might not have known it but he was very close to being expelled. That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this House. That goes for anybody. That's disrespectful, and I won't tolerate it.

Reporter: The PCs have accused the Liberal government for being in contempt of parliament for using taxpayers' money for radio ads to boast about their 25 per cent cuts to hydro bills when the legislation hasn't been passed yet. This is the latest promotional prop that is infuriating the opposition. The Liberal party dispatched volunteers to Toronto subway stations this morning, handing out pamphlets to boost the hydro plan.

Unidentified: The Liberal party says hydro rates are rising too quickly, but you're the reason hydro rates have been rising too quickly.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier: We made investments, and we're not ashamed of the investments we've made. We're proud that we have an electricity system that is an excellent system.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They don't seem to care what the Auditor General says. They don't seem to care that this is disrespectful to taxpayers, and they may be in contempt of parliament.

Reporter: The government says it has every right to advertise the 25 per cent hydro rate reduction to give families a chance to plan their budgets accordingly. The NDP pointed out today the government is not offering hydro rate relief to hospitals, and, in some cases, it's very expensive. Toronto East saw its hydro bills go up 71 per cent in the last seven years, Mount Sinai went up 45 per cent and the Hamilton Hospital, its bill has gone up 105 per cent in the last seven years. Reporting live at Queen's Park, I'm Paul bliss, send it back to you.

Anchor: Thank you, Paul.

CHCH Opposition is Asking Premier to End Hydro Rate Reduction

Source: CHCH

Mar 21, 2017 6:08 PM (5)

Anchor: It got was heated during Question Period at Queen's Park earlier today.

Patrick Brown, Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader: Will the Premier stop her re-election campaigning and using taxpayer resources to do it. It is wrong and the Premier knows that.

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy: While they stand up and yell and shake their fists Mr. Speaker, they actually have no plan.

Anchor: The opposition is asking that the Premier what they believe are bias pro-Liberal party ads disguised as provincial government radio advisories. The ads promote the 25 per cent reduction in Ontario hydro rates. Regardless of the fact the law has not been passed yet, the opposition feels that taxpayer money should not be used for partisan advertisements.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader: Their biggest interest is their own political power, their own political position and this latest move is an attempt for them to, you know, to try to reverse the polls, frankly, and the free fall that Kathleen Wynne is in right now.

Anchor: Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault told the Legislature yesterday that the Liberals have spent less than \$1 million on radio, print, and television ads. Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says that those ads would never have been granted under the previous government's advertising rules because "It does convey an impression of the current government" and it's more like a pat on the back type of advertisement. The Liberals flipped that rule two years ago.

CHCH PC Leader Takes Issue with Liberal Party Flyers Promoting

Source: CHCH

Mar 21, 2017 6:10 PM (6)

Anchor: The opposition accuses the Liberal government from blurring the line between government services and political statements. While the Ontario government radio ads are still on the air, earlier today, Liberal party members were handing out these flyers at transit stops. The flyers promote the Liberal government's hydro rate cut. Liberal MPP Deb Matthews says those flyers were paid for by political donations and are not out of the ordinary when an election is on the horizon.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier: This is political advertising. Other parties do this kind of event. The blitz. Letting people know what we are doing. This is not government advertising at all. This is the Liberal party advertising.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: The fact that that the Liberal party flyers are the same as – you know, they are spending a few dollars of Liberal party pamphlets and they're spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buy. So yeah, they are ripping taxpayers off for their own partisan purposes.

MCTV Opposition Blast Government Over Hydro Rate Cut Advert

Source: MCTV

Mar 21, 2017 6:15 PM (21)

Anchor: Anger continued at Queen's Park today and things got a bit unruly. Opposition MPPs are blasting away at the Wynne government for taxpayer funded commercials and flyers boasting about their recent hydro rate cuts. That story from CTV's Paul Bliss.

Glenn Thibeault, Energy Minister: They actually have no plan!

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Reporter: I find it interesting the brochure says the Liberal party recognizes that hydro rates are rising too quickly, but you're the reason hydro rates have been rising too quickly.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier: So we made investments, and we're not ashamed of the investments we've made. We're proud that we have an electricity system that is an excellent system.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: They don't seem to care what the Auditor General says. They don't seem to care that this is disrespectful to taxpayers, and they may be in contempt of parliament.

Reporter: The government says it has every right to advertise the 25 per cent hydro rate reduction to give families a chance to plan their budgets accordingly.

CFPL Liberals Facing Backlash From PCs Over Hydro Ads

Source: CFPL

Mar 21, 2017 6:36 PM (21)

Anchor: Tense moments at Queen's Park today after the Speaker threatened to expel an MPP – something that is rarely done. It was all part of the charged-up debate surrounding the Liberal use of taxpayer dollars to fund radio ads promoting their hydro plan.

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CKVR Opposition Continue to Criticize Liberal Government Over

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CP24 Interview With Deputy Ontario Premier On Hydro Ad Campaign

Source: CP24

Mar 21, 2017 5:18 PM

Anchor: The Liberal government is facing intense pressure over its hydro bill advertising campaign today.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader: Will the Premier stop her re-election campaigning and using taxpayer resources to do it? It's wrong, and the Premier knows that.

[Applause]

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader: The Mount Sinai health system saw a 45 per cent increase in

hydro bills between 2010 and 2015. That's nearly \$1.5 million, Speaker, that is not going to support front line health care.

Yasir Naqvi, Ontario Government House Leader: We are focused in making sure that we bring meaningful relief to the people of Ontario, that we reduce hydro rates by 25 per cent. That's what the government is doing. It's a very important policy. Obviously the opposition is only engaged in distraction, because, Speaker, they have no plan.

Anchor: The opposition is angry the Liberals are running ads on radio and social media boasting about their 25 per cent cuts. Now the ads are being paid for with taxpayer money, and they've also begun handing out flyers on the subway system. Now the opposition is also upset because the Wynne government stripped the Attorney General of the power to reject ads as being partisan and self-serving. Well we're joined now by Deputy Premier Deb Matthews to address some of the criticism your party is facing. Thank you for coming in.

Deb Matthews, Deputy Ontario Premier: My pleasure.

Anchor: I want to show people the glossy handout, and actually on my way into the subway this morning, a few people, two or three I think, were handing these out, and they talk about 25 per cent off your monthly hydro bill, which of course has been of much discussion recently. I got a quote from, you might know him, Doug Ford, a political guy, very political, also in the printing business. He guesstimates that about 100,000 of these cost \$20,000, \$20,000 of taxpayers' money per 100,000 to hand these out.

Deputy Premier Matthews: Let's be really clear. These are not taxpayer funded. These have the Liberal Party logo on. These are Liberal Party –

Anchor: So these are not part – okay. So the only thing – what are the taxpayers paying for then? How much for this ad campaign?

Deputy Premier Matthews: So we are advertising. The government initiative to reduce electric bills by an average of 25 per cent because people need to know – you know people like you and I who – and your – people watching the show are in the loop. They understand what we're doing. Not everybody does. So this is a really important issue for a lot of people in this province.

Anchor: But you know what –

Deputy Premier Matthews: So we're getting the word out that their bills are coming down.

Anchor: We've had so much coverage here on CP24, just everywhere, of this 25 per cent cut, which is really 8 per cent plus the 17. But – so I think it's pretty much everybody is aware of the hydro issue in this province and angry about it. But, again, how much does it cost to take out these advertising dollars? Our dollar to pay for advertising.

Deputy Premier Matthews: Yeah. So I don't have the dollar figure for our campaign. But government does advertise, and we have restrictions on what we can advertise, what we can include and what we can't include in advertisements. But governments have always advertised what we do and that's nothing new about this one.

Anchor: But, you know, there are – there is the discussion about it being unethical to be able to do this. This is something the Liberals were talking about themselves about, you know, backing off on this kind of partisan advertising.

Deputy Premier Matthews: So we brought back in 2004, I think, legislation to give the Auditor General the right to review and eliminate partisan ads because you might remember the previous – Mike Harris actually appeared in his own government funded ads. It was outrageous what they were doing. So the new legislation actually clarified what we meant by partisan ads. It's still the most restrictive legislation in North America. In fact, I think only New Zealand has restrictions like we have in Ontario. So can't mention the party name, can't have a politician in the ads. There are a number of restrictions. The Auditor General reviews them and approved it.

Anchor: So were you there as part of the decision making for the ad campaign? Like how did you brainstorm to think it would be a good idea and go over well with everyone in the Legislature with this kind of ad campaign?

Deputy Premier Matthews: So here's the problem. The Conservatives don't like – they don't have a plan. They don't know what they think about this, because I think everybody agrees people needed that hydro relief. So they're trying to find a way to criticize it and they're really grasping at straws on this.

Anchor: So you think it's okay there's this money – the advertising dollars couldn't be better spent elsewhere? You think we are all just that unaware of what's going on with hydro?

Deputy Premier Matthews: I think it's important that people know what's happening in the province. I think this is an initiative that was top of mind for a lot of people, people who are really facing tough decisions about where to spend their money, and now they know that relief is coming. I think people should know that. We're really proud of what we're doing. And the two opposition parties are really scrambling to figure out how they're going to oppose it, and this is what they've landed on. But do I think people should know? I absolutely think people should know.

Anchor: Okay. Deb Matthews, thank you for your time today.

Deputy Premier Matthews: Thank you.